Jacaranda

NEW ACQUISITIONS

SUMMER 2019

Jacaranda

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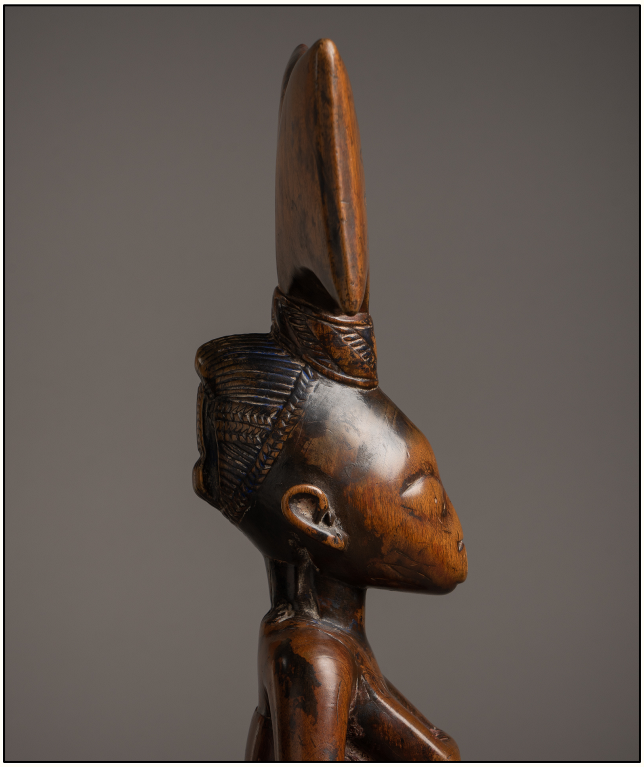
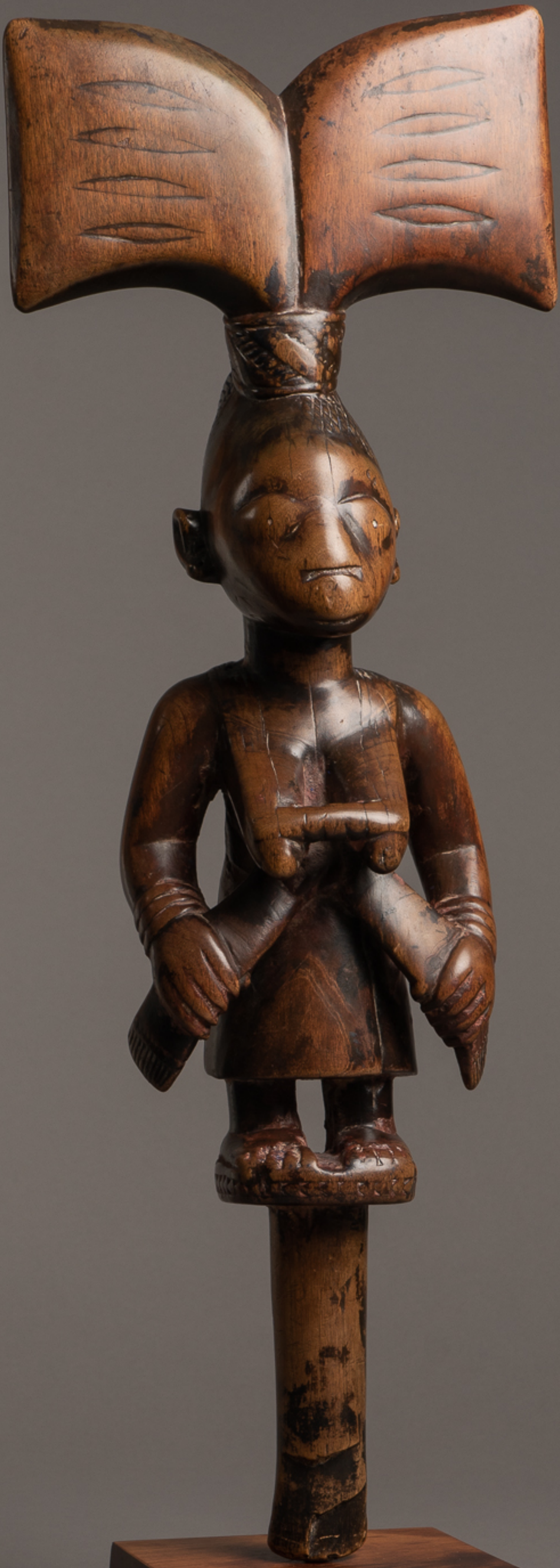
DANCE WAND FIGURE, *OSE SHANGO*

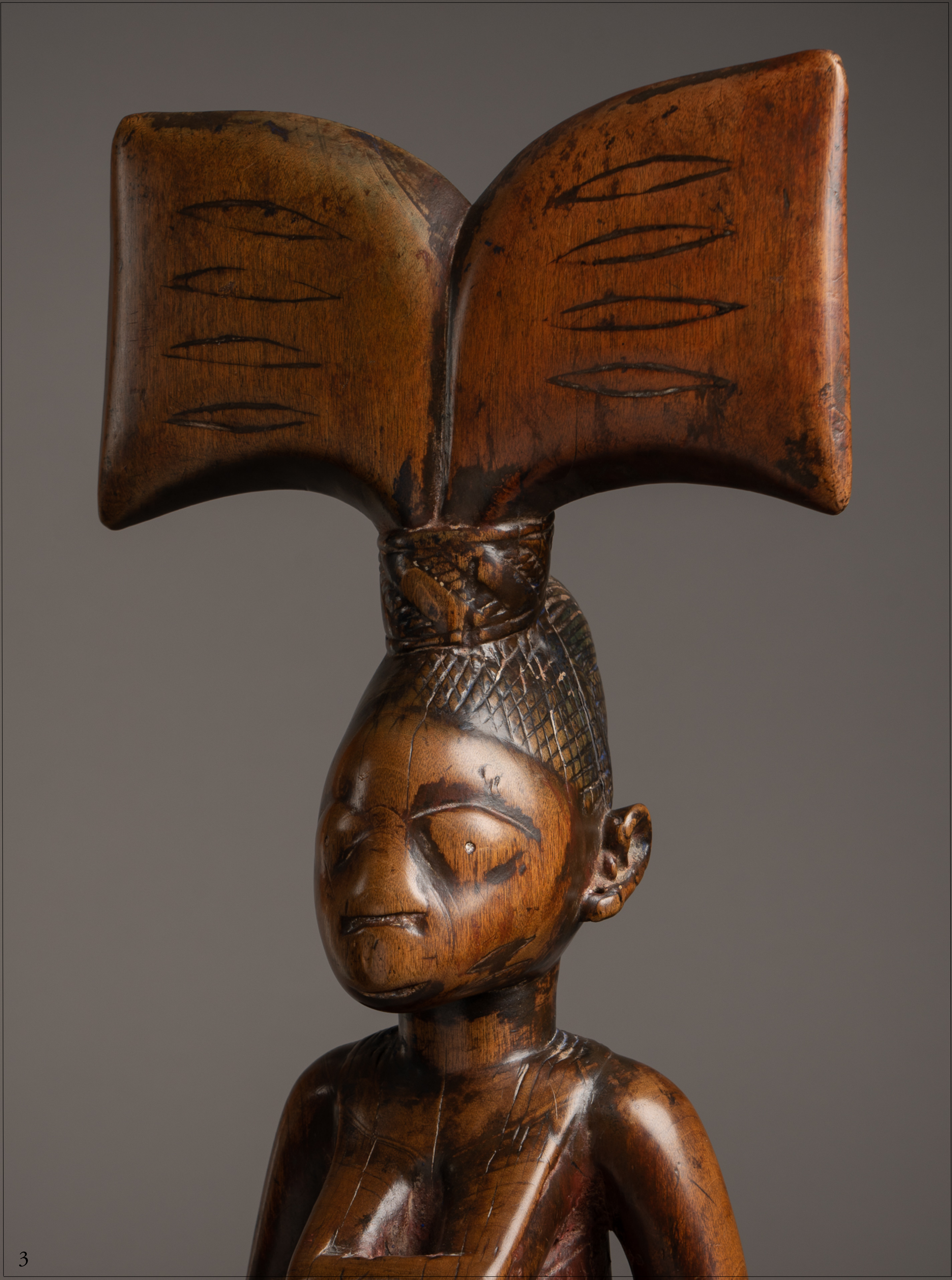
Yoruba, Nigeria

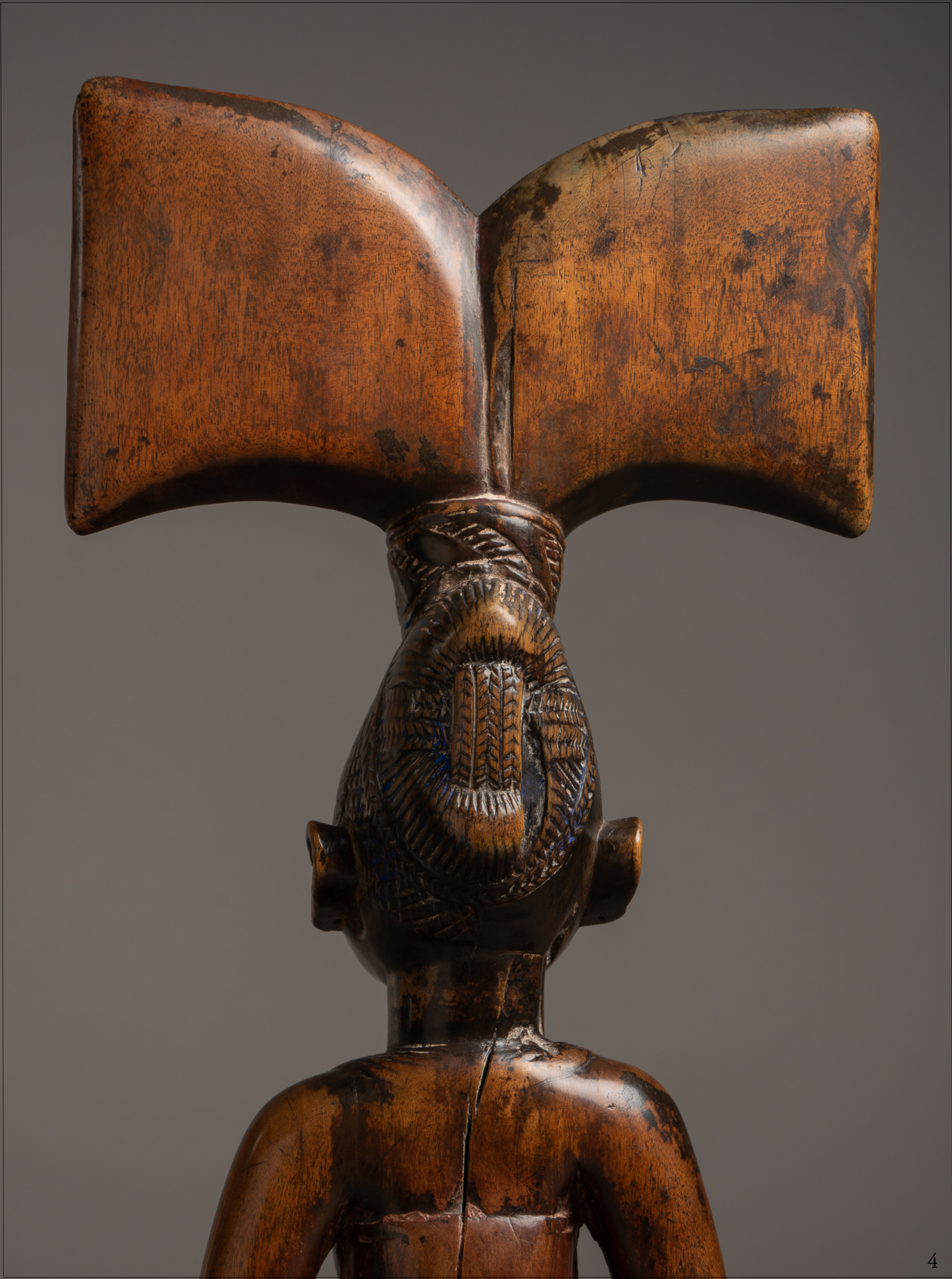
Late 19th century
19" h 7 1/4" w
Wood
Provenance: Ex Ernst Anspach; private US collection

The Yoruba religious world recognizes a pantheon of deities called *orisha*, whose identities and attributes are embodied in ritual objects. Priests and adherents of the widespread cult of Shango, the fiery god of thunder and lightning, commission dance staffs *(ose Shango)* to invoke his striking power and protection. This figure, with surfaces and features thoroughly smoothed with age and use, represents a female devotee of Shango. The dramatic double axe form atop the figure's head is the primary symbol associated with Shango, reflecting the power of the violent storm and his ability to hurl thunder celts into the community. The figure wears a lip plug, the practice of which began to decline in the late 19th century, indicating this is an early object.









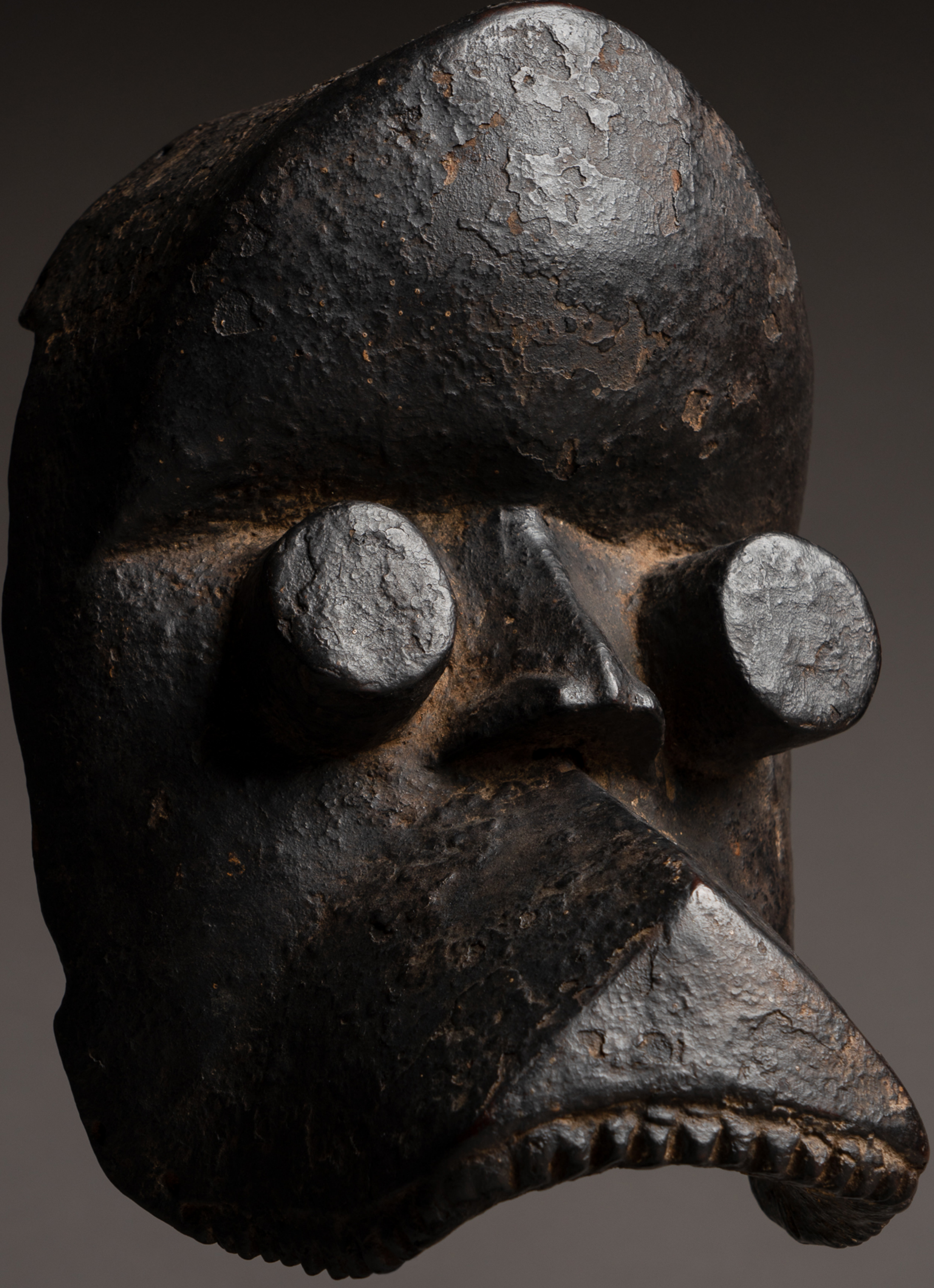
MASK, *BU GLE*

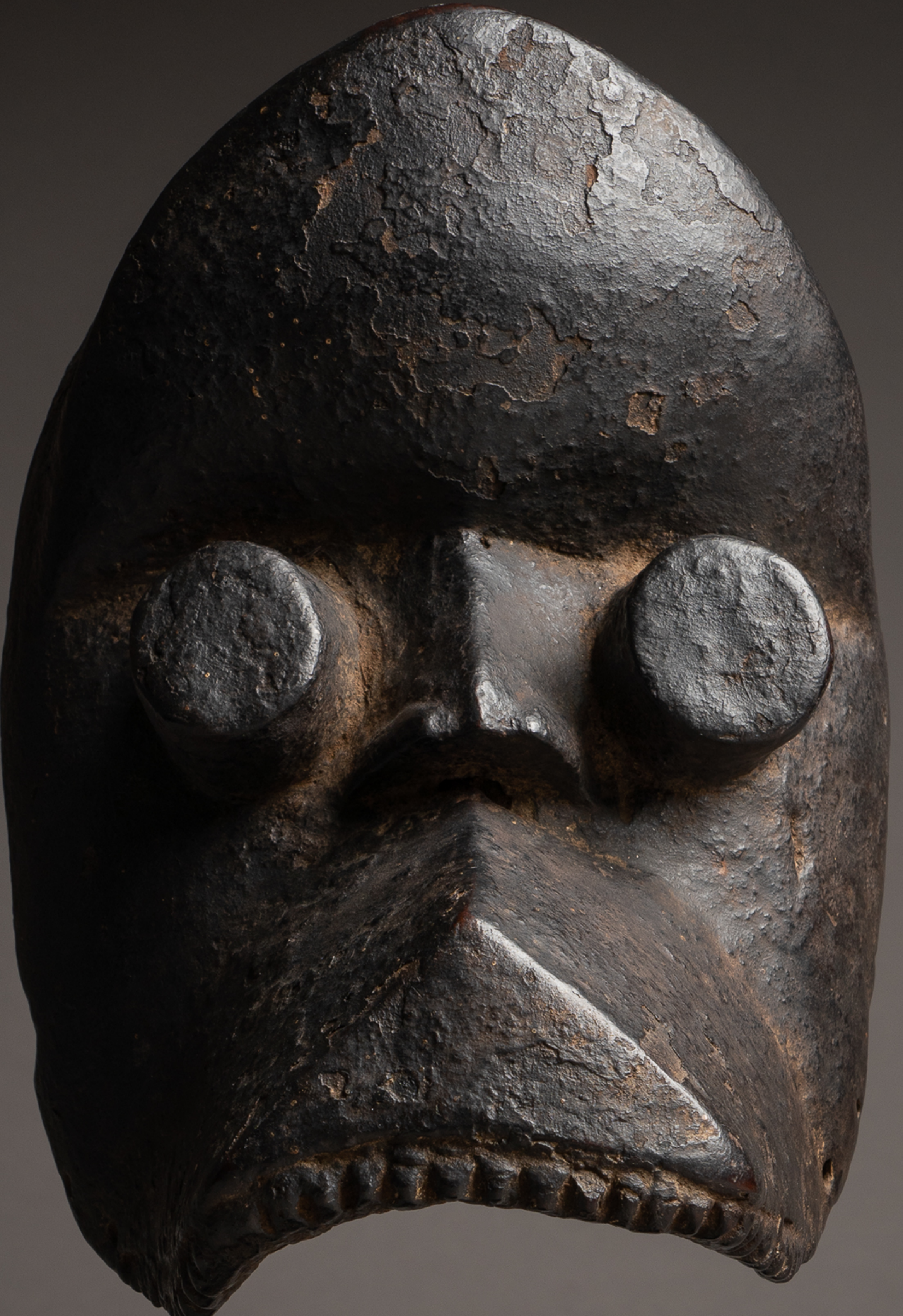
Dan, Liberia

Late 19th century
Wood
Provenance: Collected in eastern Liberia by Hayden and Odette Walling, 1952–54

Dan masks are embodiments of *gle*, discorporate spirits who wish to communicate with and aid human communities but who lack a physical form. Materialized in masks inspired through dream messages, they thus attain the power to achieve their desires through the medium of masquerade. The mask presented here, known as *bu gle*, is commonly referred to as a 'war mask.' Its role is to stir up unrest and alarm in the audience, and it is believed an aspect of its original function was to prepare the community for war.

Bu gle are typified by popping, circular eyes, prominent foreheads and wedge-like mouths. This example dispenses with the more naturalistic features of others of its kind in favor of a strikingly minimal design. Reduced to its essential shapes, the strong, almost brutal geometric plan of this mask carries an incredible aesthetic force that is further deepened by a dark, earthy patina.





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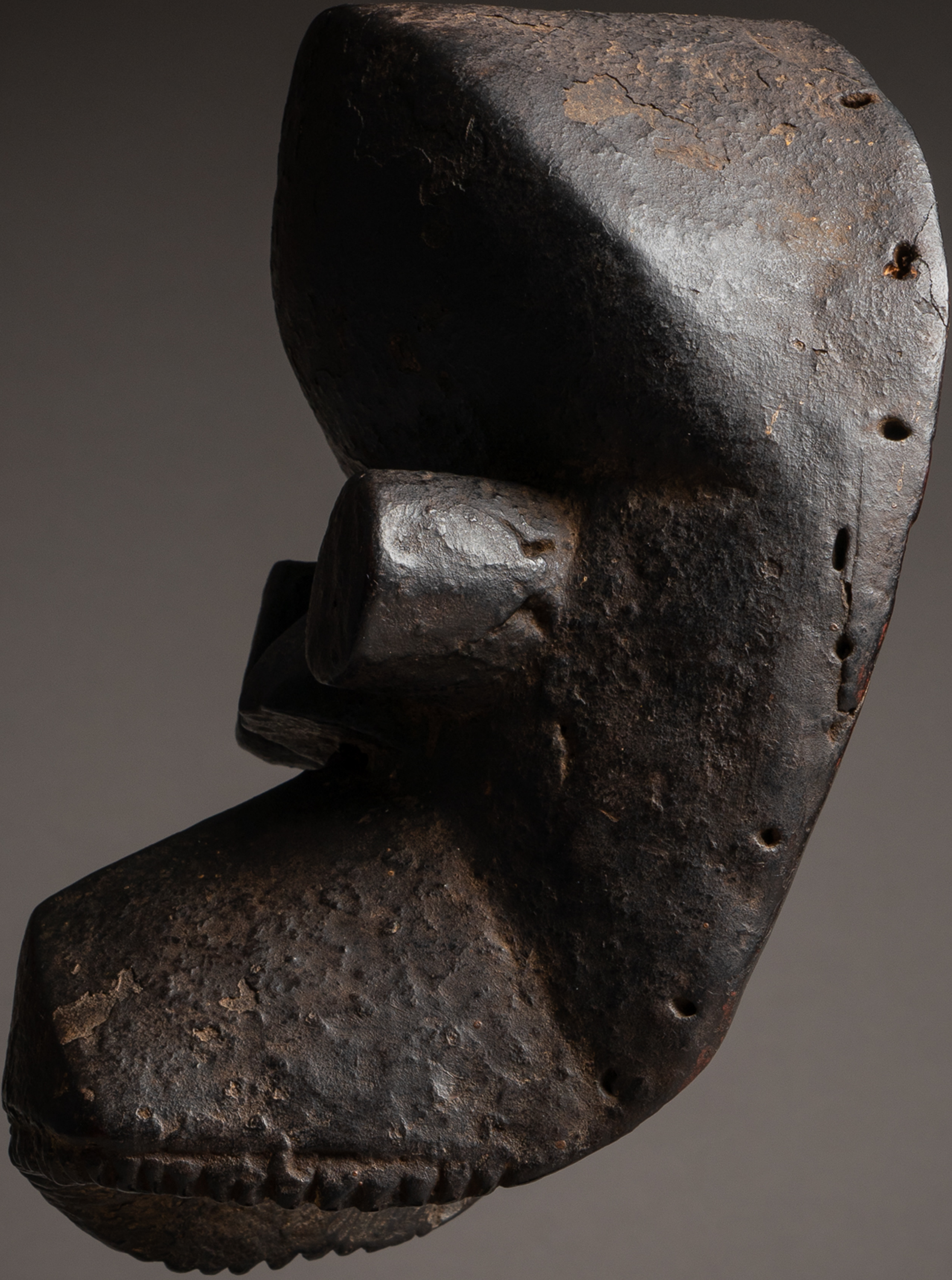
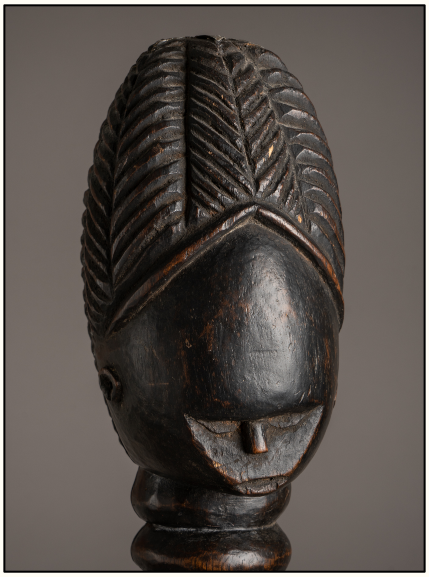


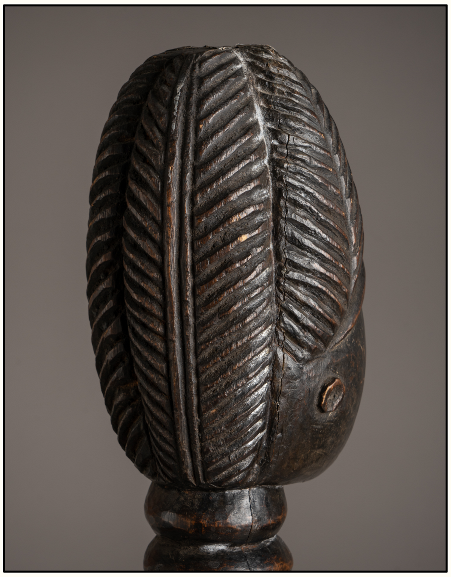
HELMET MASK, *GBETU*

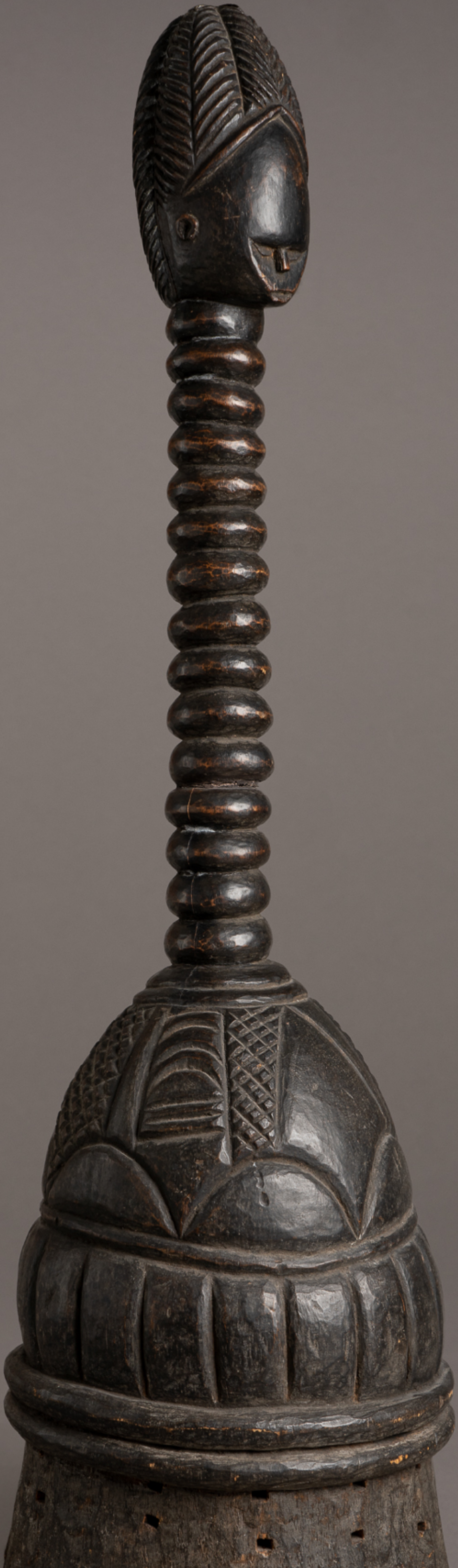
Gola, Liberia

Late 19th or early 20th century
32” h 9 1/2” w
Wood
Provenance: Ex Jay C. Leff, Uniontown; Parke-Bernet Galleries, New York, April 22 1967, lot 29; Frieda and Milton Rosenberg; Sotheby’s New York, November 14, 2008

This impressive Gola helmet mask immediately captures the gaze with its dramatic vertical movement, leading the eye to rest on its finial, which depicts a woman with a high forehead and elaborate coiffure. The face and ringed neck of this mask are attributes commonly associated with Mende art, and consequently this type of mask is often erroneously identified as a woman's mask for the Sande society. It is, in fact, a mask used by the Poro men’s society, and is known as *borwu* among the Vai and *gbetu* among the Gola. Both names mean "long neck" and refer to the cultural ideal of a beautiful woman with a long and elegant neck. The classic coiffure indicates a refined woman of social status. This example features an unusually long ringed neck and a delicately carved face. The bold geometric motifs incised on the helmet’s dome are characteristic of Gola versions of the mask. The *gbetu* is an entertainment mask that performs acrobatic feats, garbed in a voluminous raffia mantle.







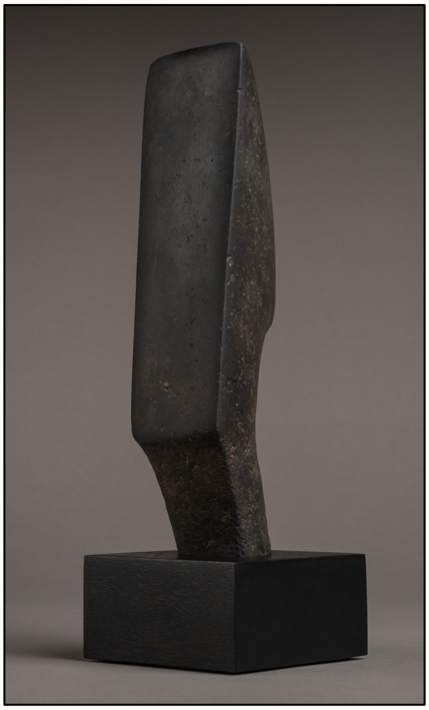
ADZE BLADE

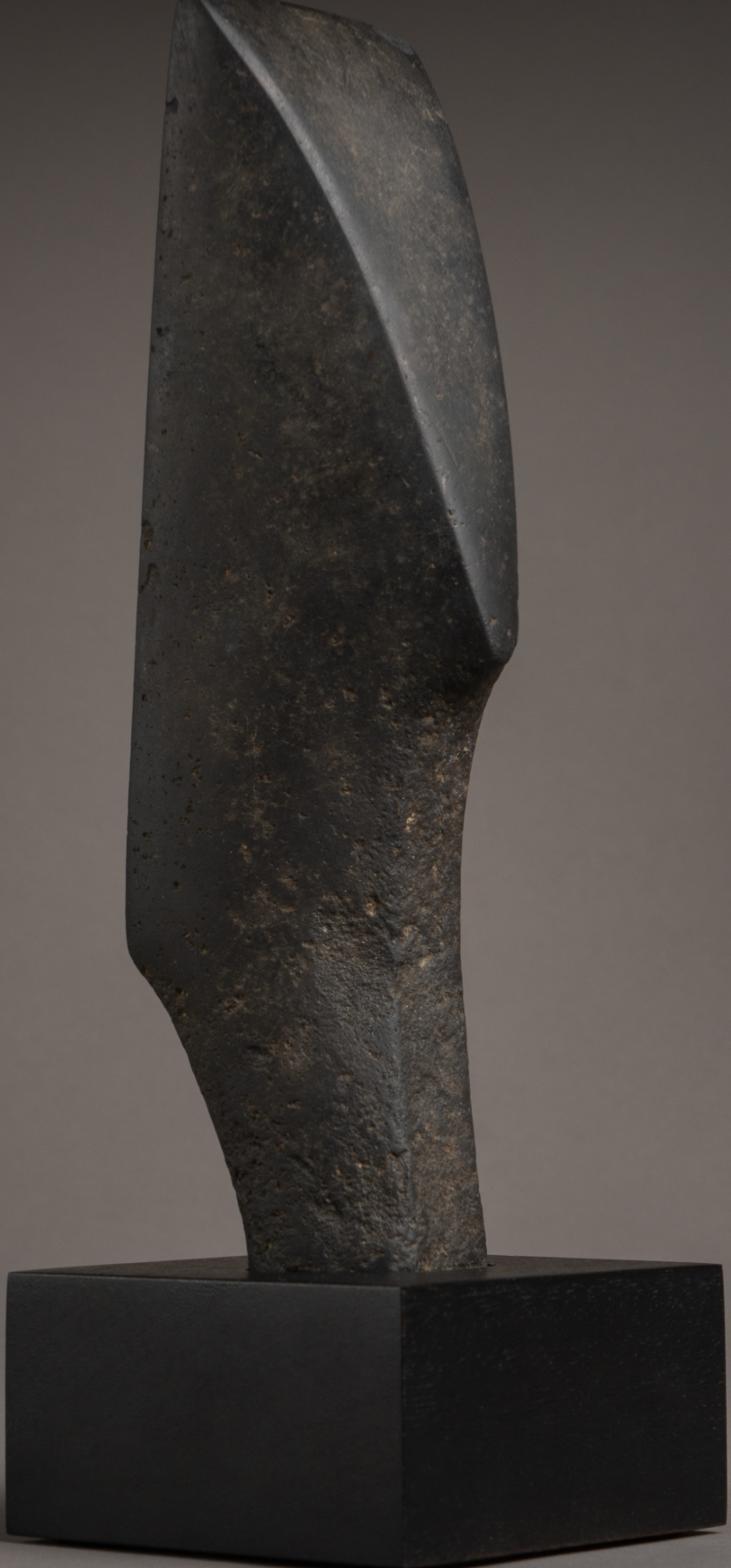
Society Islands

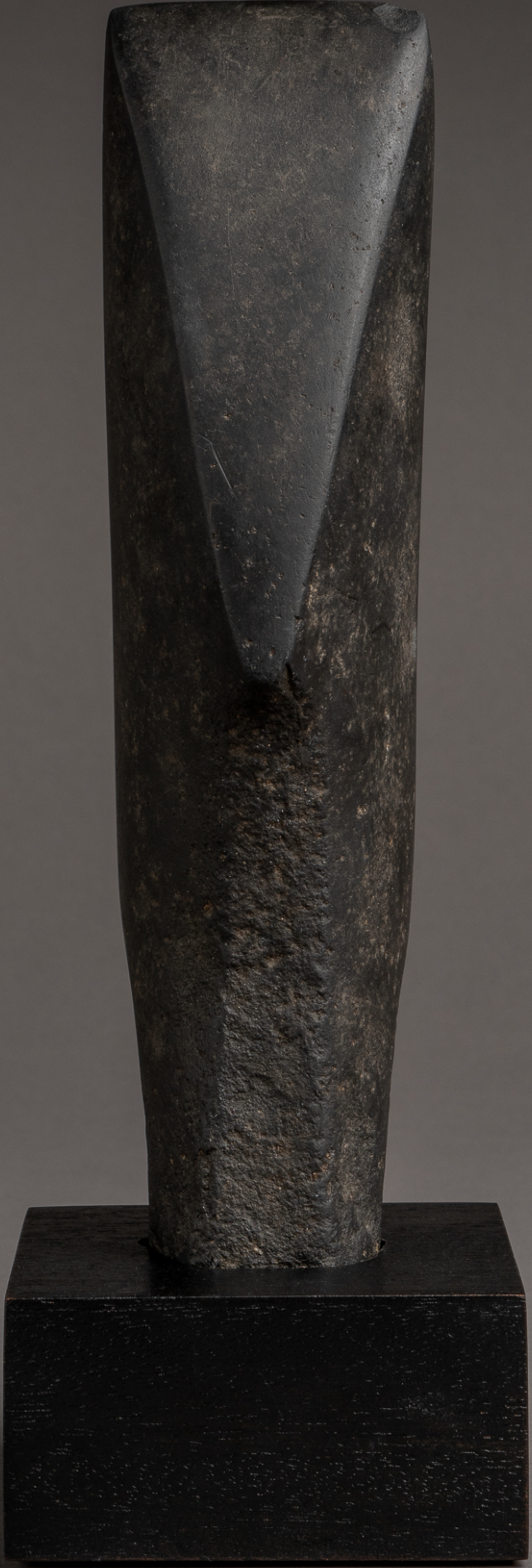
18th century or earlier
9 1/4” h 3” w
Basalt
Provenance: Ex Hurst Gallery; Paula G. Rubel and Abraham Rosman

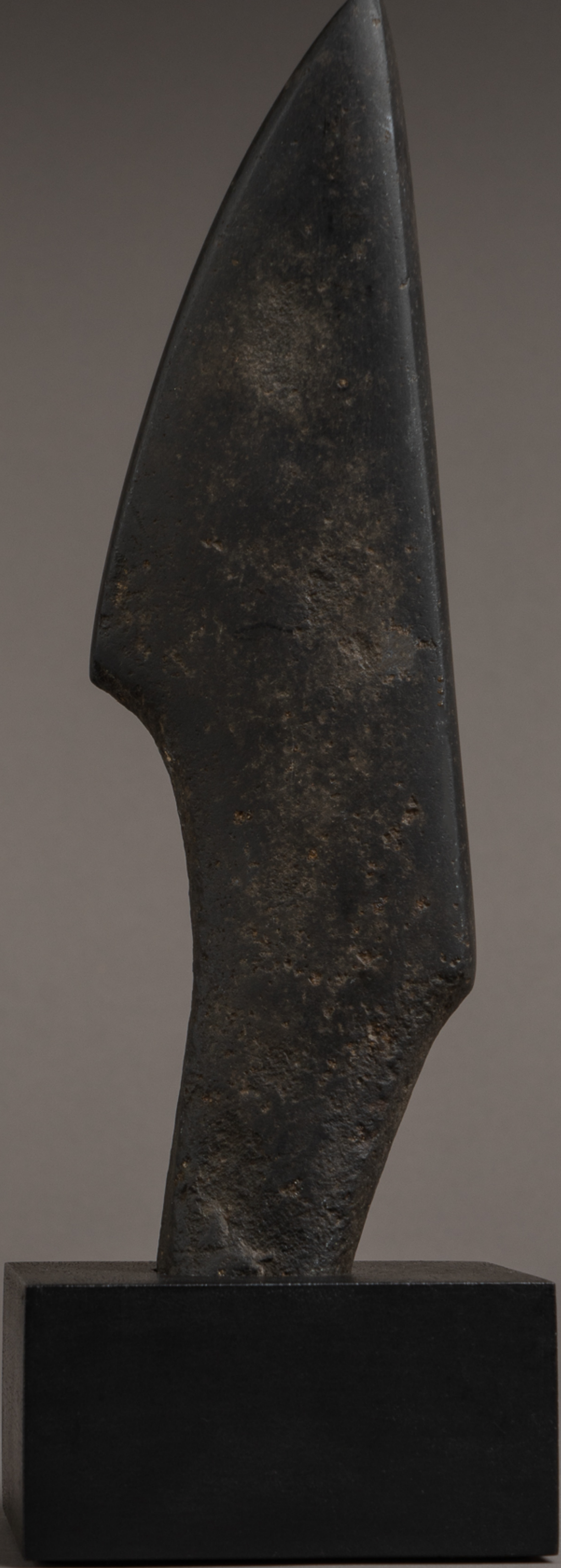
A magnificent Society Islands adze blade. Cut from fine-grained black basalt, the blade is triangular in cross-section and is smoothly polished on all sides. The tang, where the blade would have been fastened to a ‘T-shaft,’ is gradually stepped and roughly cut. Its dark and geometric planes present a strong monumental quality, and its triangular facet, lifting gently outward from the tang, suggests a highly abstracted human face.

Adzes were produced across Polynesia, facilitating both agriculture and the production of a vast array of wooden objects and tools. Given the material importance of the adze, as well as the considerable time, effort and expertise it took to create one, adze-makers were accorded significant respect in their communities and were well compensated for their work.







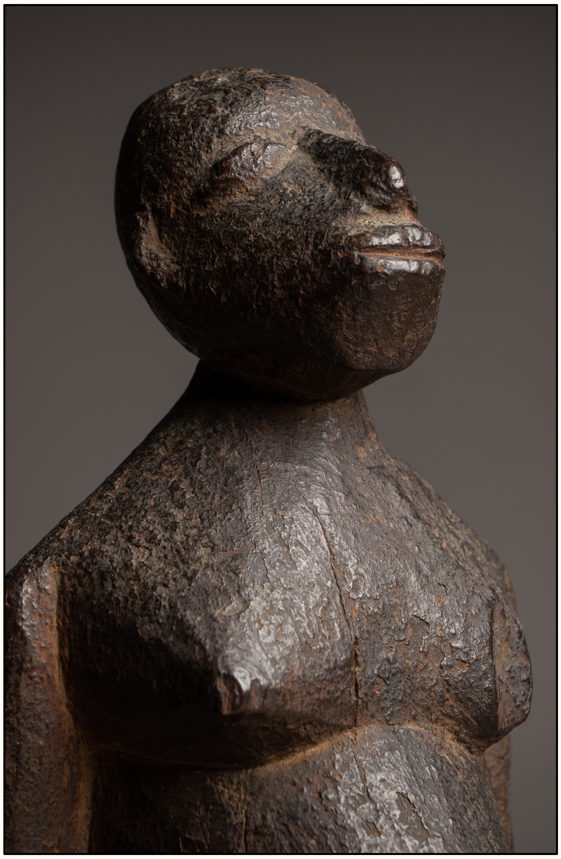


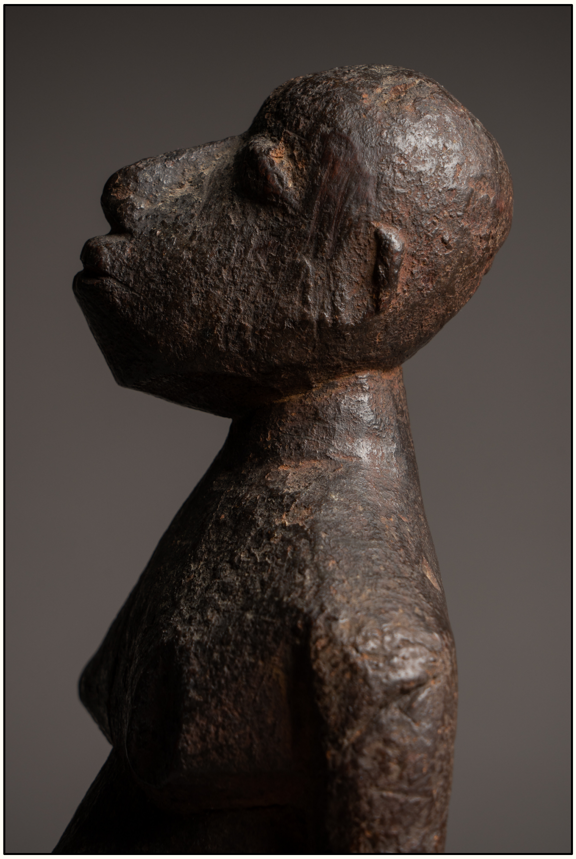
ALTAR FIGURE

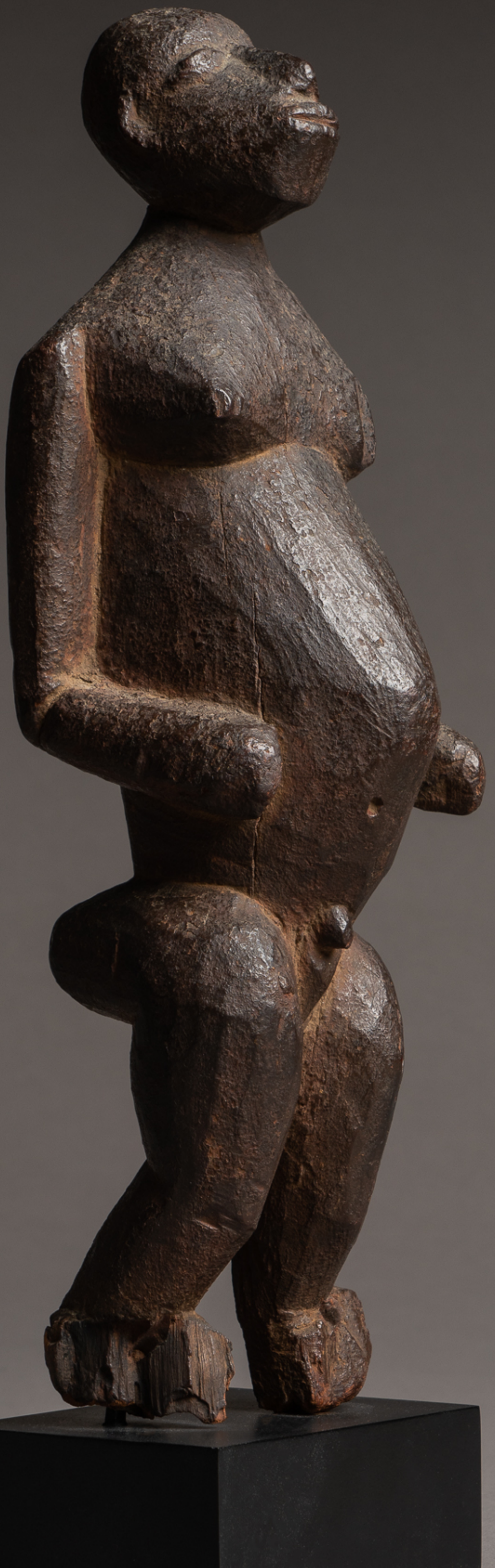
Gurunsi, Burkina Faso

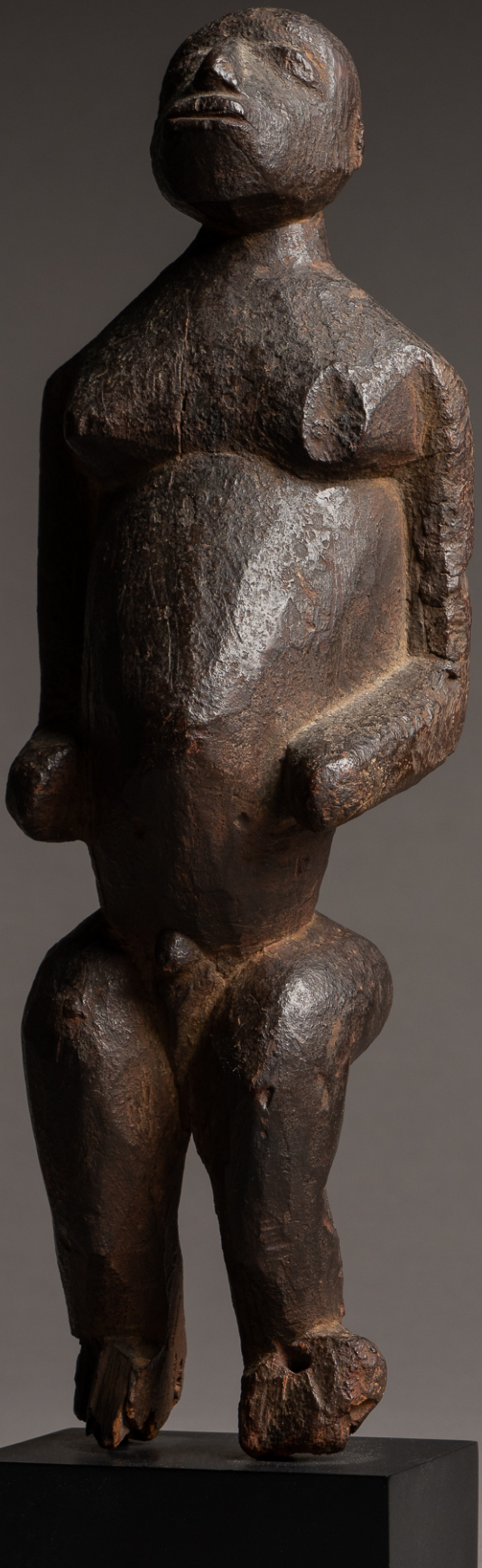
Late 19th or early 20th century
11” h 4” w
Wood
Provenance: Ex Rena Berger; Bruce Frank Primitive Art; Michael Oliver

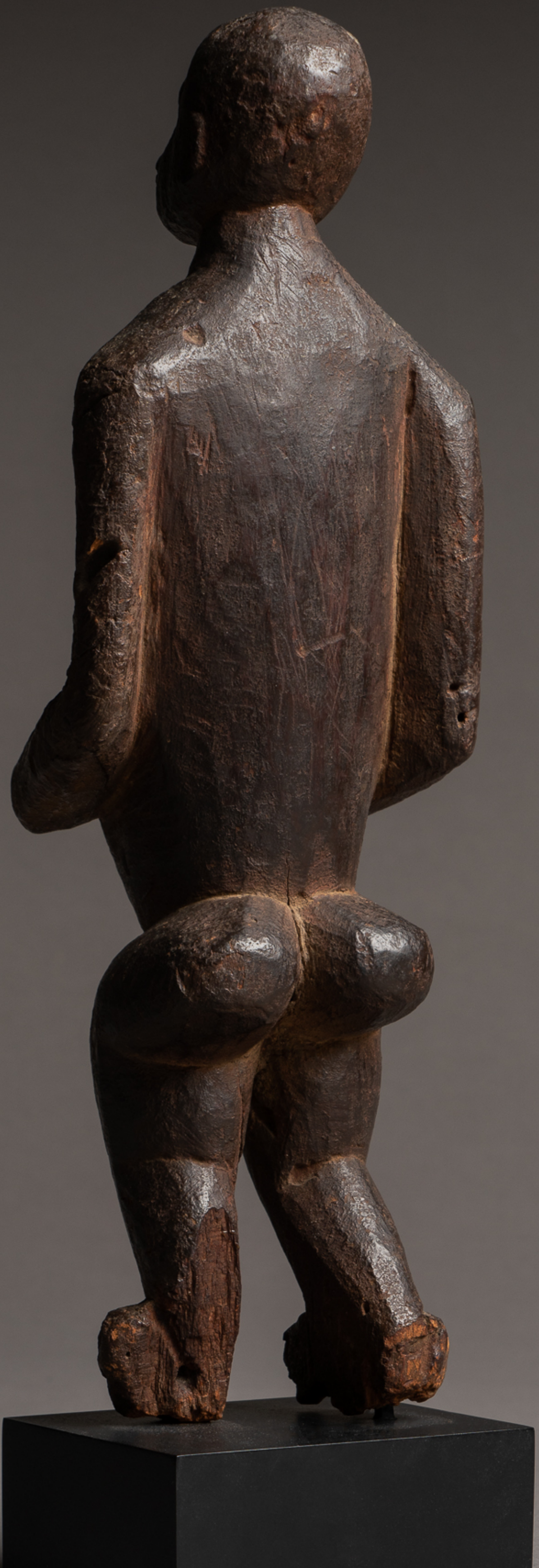
A male Gurunsi altar figure showing monumental stature and weight in its proportions. Viewed frontally, the torso, arms and compact thighs offer a dense sculptural mass with great tension, while in profile, the raised chin, bent knees, and protruding belly and buttocks present a poised but gentle silhouette. Relatively naturalistic features and a thoughtful pose lend a strong air of individual personality to this figure, which likely represented a mythical clan founder.











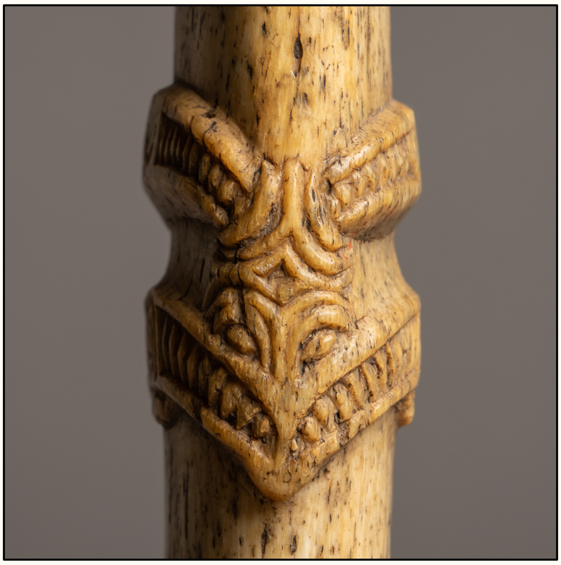
HAND AXE, *PATITI*

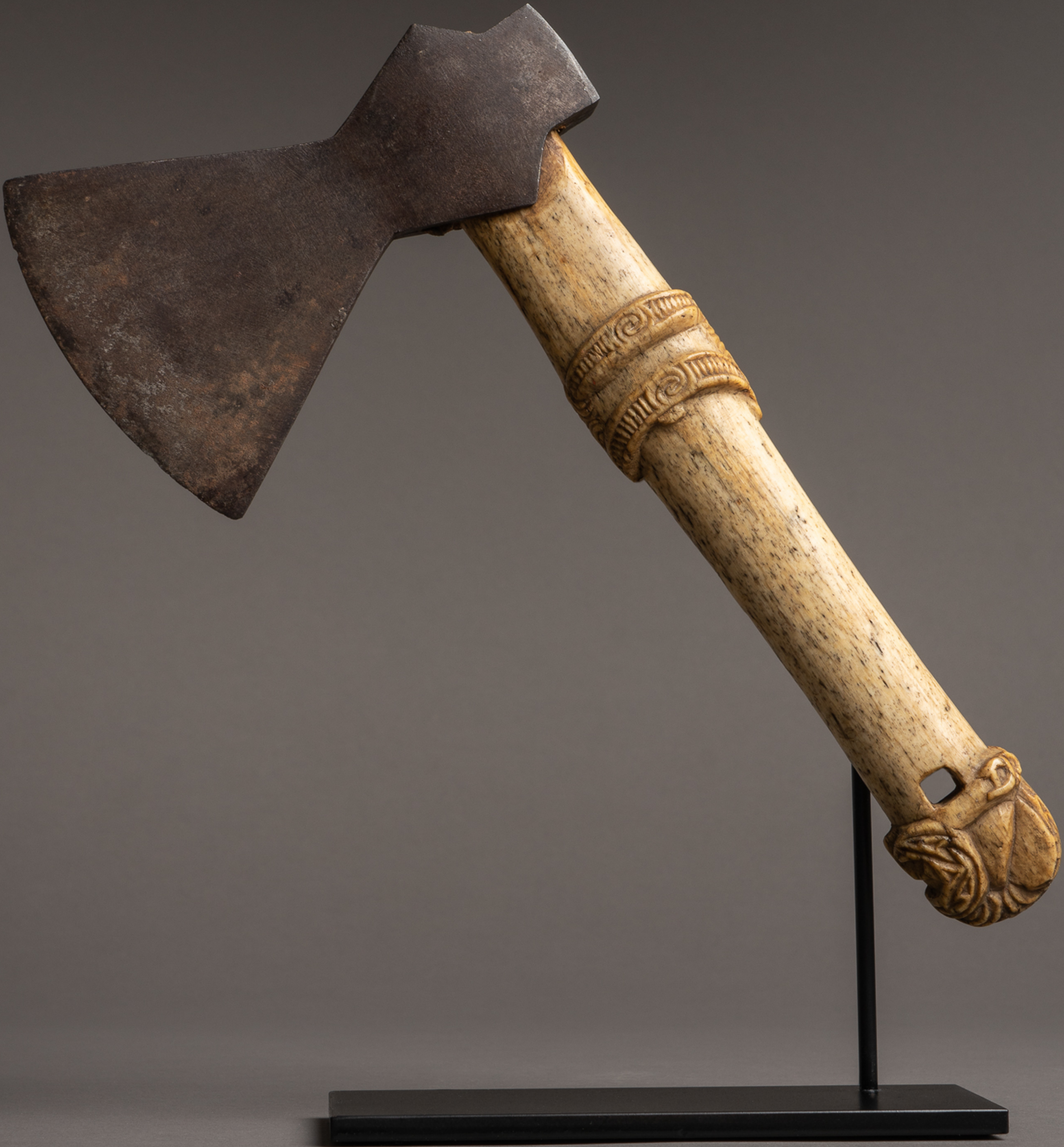
Maori, New Zealand

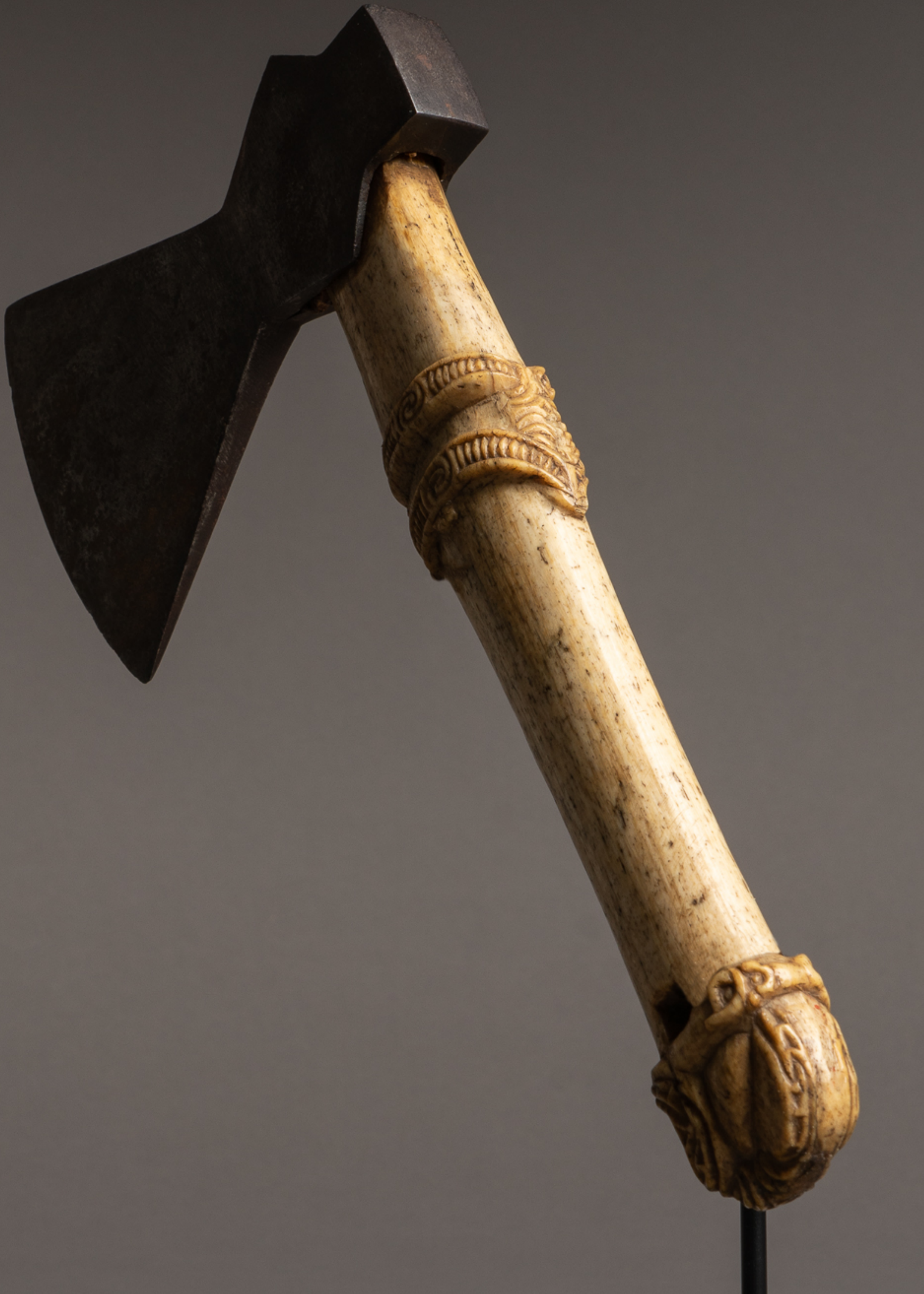
First half of 19th century
10 3/4” l
Bone, iron
Provenance: Ex Hurst Gallery; Leo and Lillian Fortess Collection

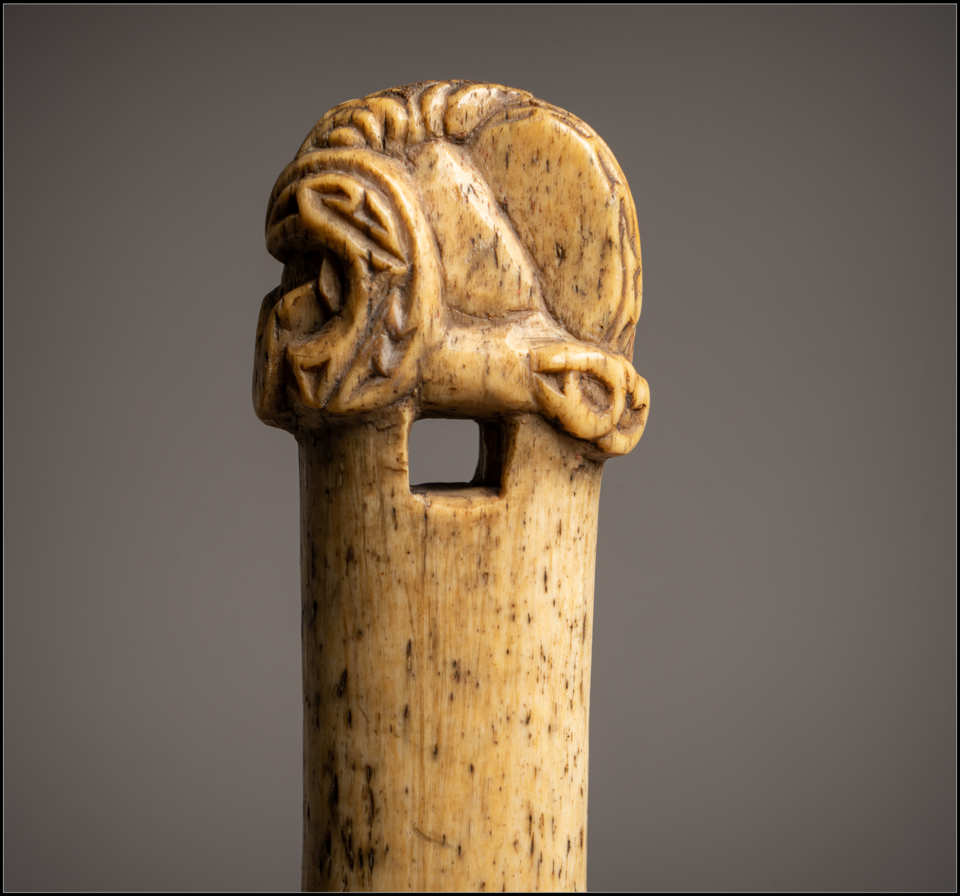
European trade in the nineteenth century had a significant influence on Maori weapon technology, and not solely due to the introduction of firearms. Iron hatchet heads were a common trade good during this time, and the Maori quickly recognized the superiority of metal blades over the traditional blades of stone and bone to which they were accustomed. As most traders offered the heads without handles, the Maori hand-crafted their own from wood or whalebone. The resulting hand axes, or *patiti*, were often artistically carved, with particular attention paid to their terminals. Iron heads were also often fitted to long handles of similar manufacture to create two-handed weapons known as *kakauroa*. The use of iron axe heads became commonplace by the 1860s, and many warriors would carry *patiti* thrust into their belts as secondary weapons to their firearms.

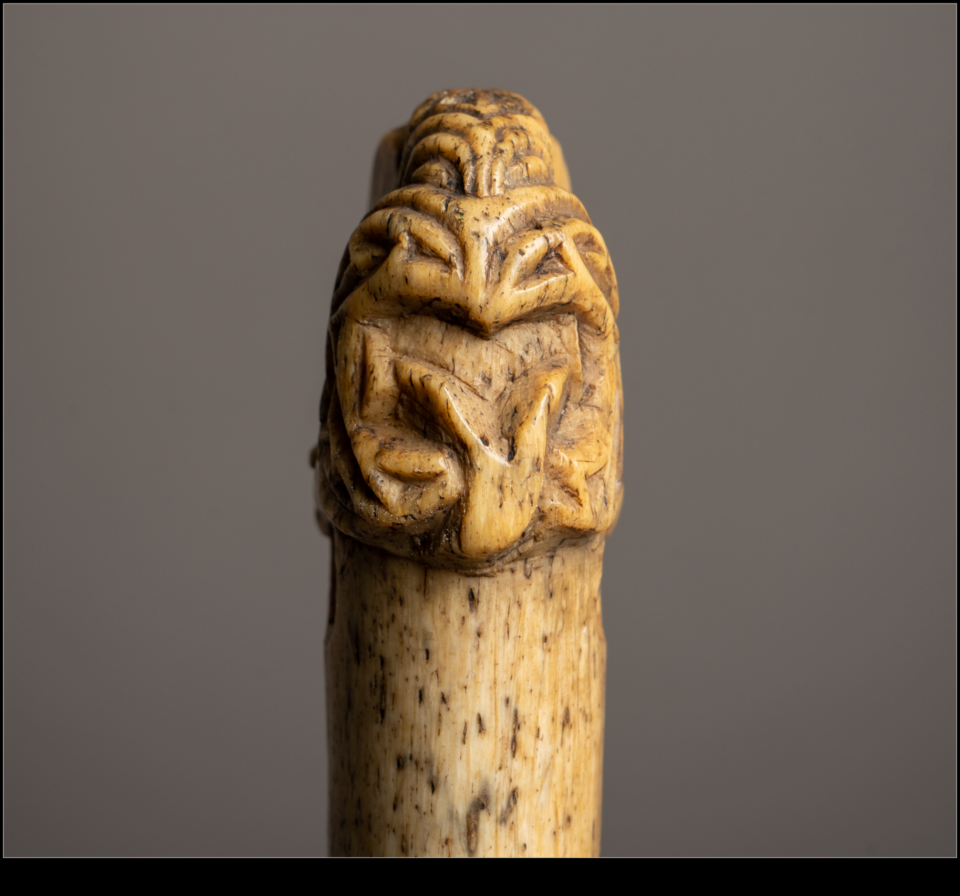
This *patiti* is a very well-preserved example with whalebone handle and steel axe head. A tiki head is found at the terminal, while the center of the haft is encircled by a janiform tiki relief.











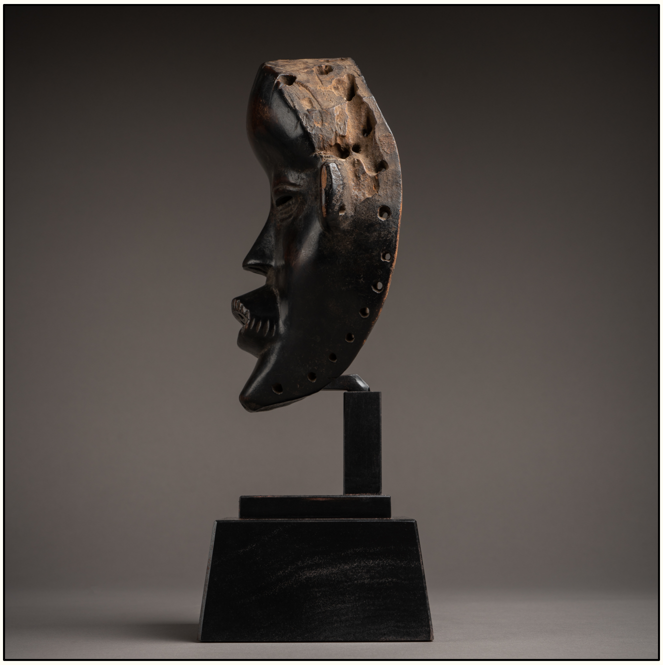
MASK, *DEAN GLE*

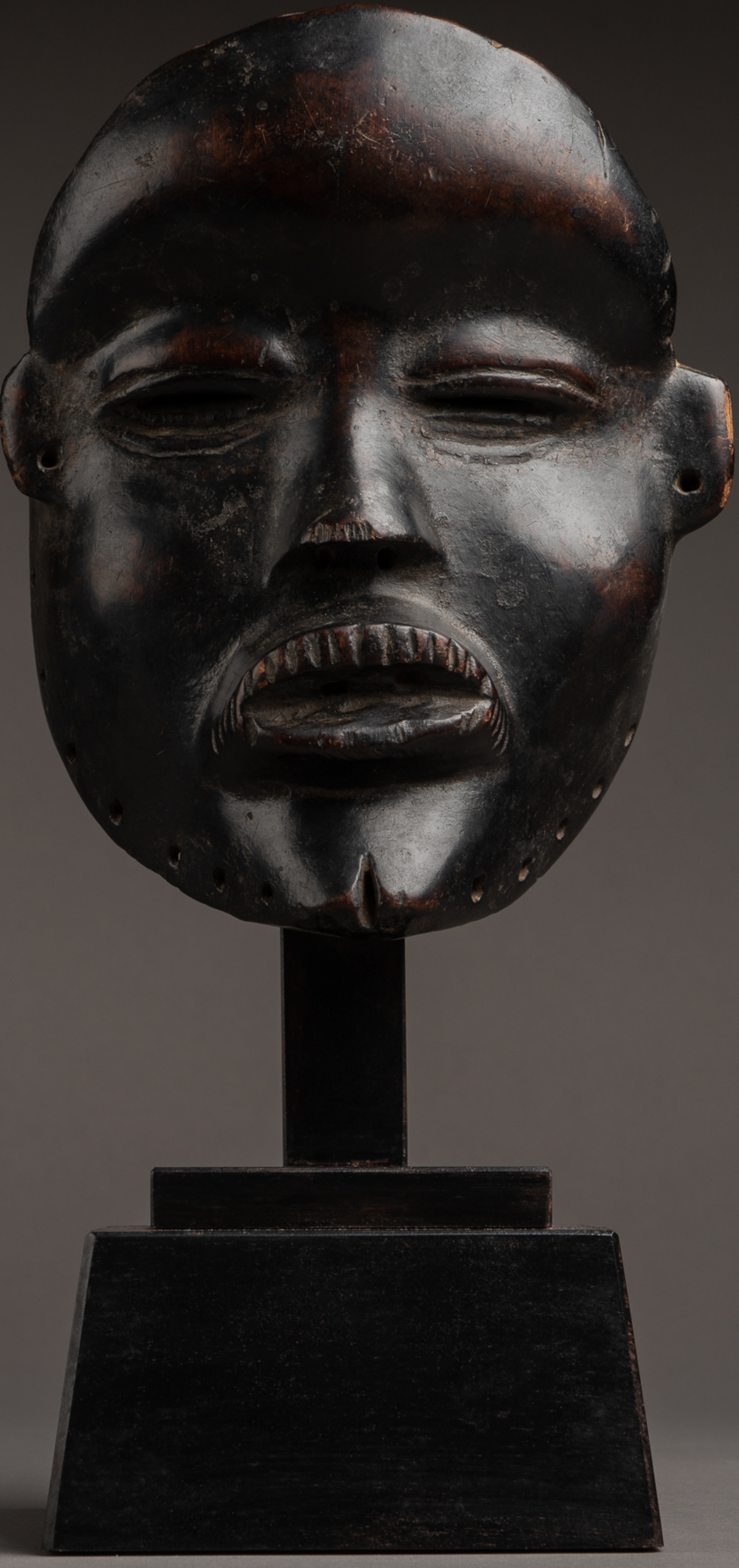
Mano, Liberia

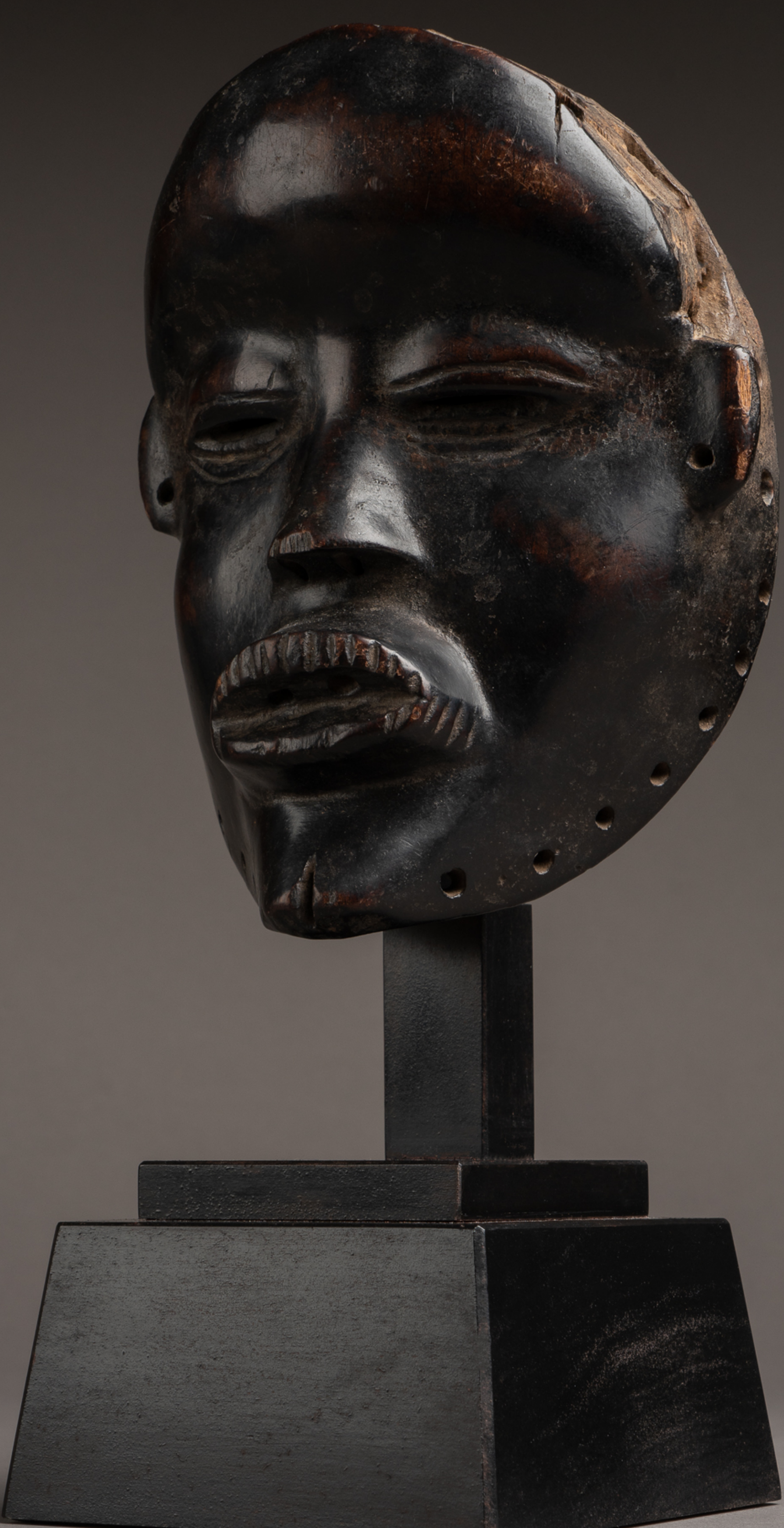
Late 19th century
7 3/4” h 6 1/2” w
Wood
Provenance: Ex private US collection

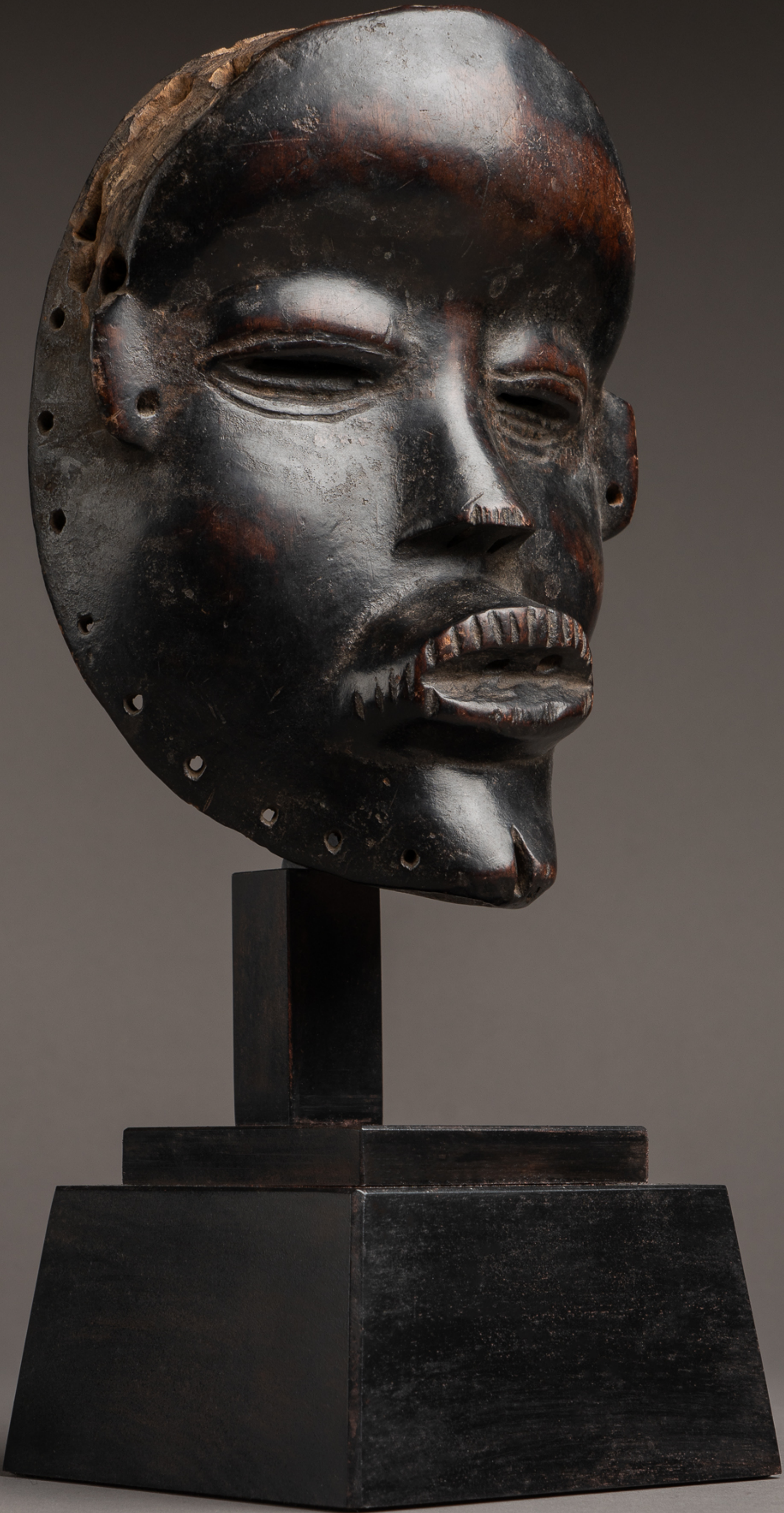
In Mano society, and in those of many of their neighbors, dance masks embody *ge* or *gle,* bush spirits that desire engagement and communication with the human community. Once the spirit is dreamt by an initiated member of the Poro men’s society, its mask will be carved for the initiate to dance, accompanied by a full-body costume constructed of raffia, feathers and fur.

This fine Mano mask displays a high, protruding forehead, pointed chin and glossy, black patina. Its half-closed eyes suggest a meditative, otherworldly power of perception, and a serenity emphasized by smooth, flowing facial forms. Slight asymmetries of the eyes and other features imbue this mask with a striking sense of realism. Though technically genderless, masks of this type are typically accepted to be feminine entities, personifying idealized beauty and approaching the community to nurture, instruct and delight.







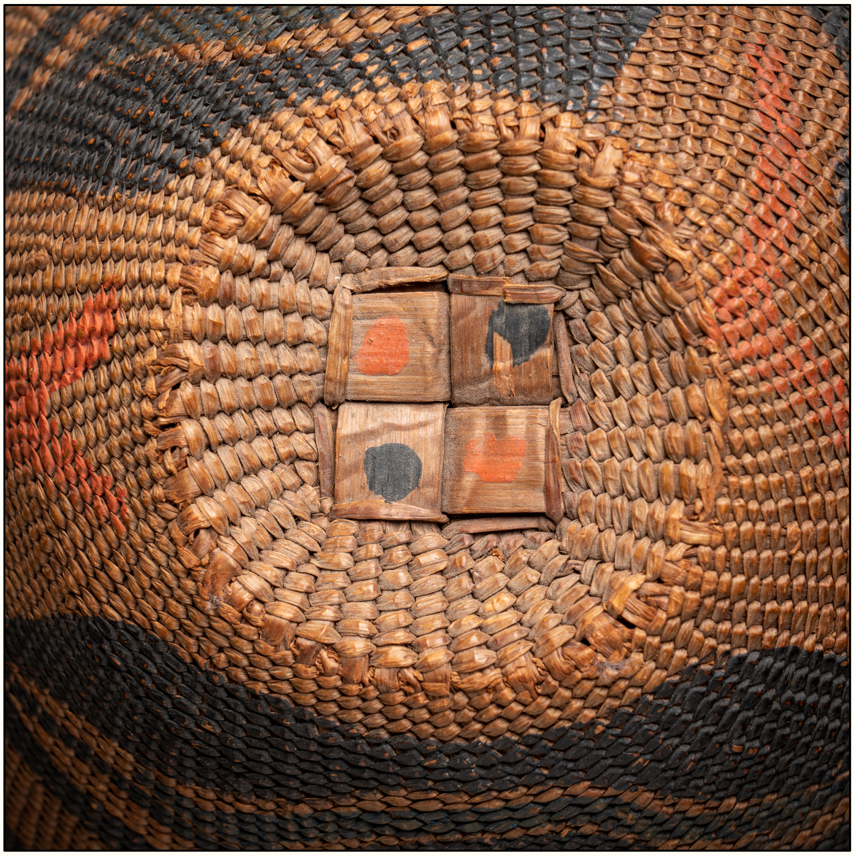


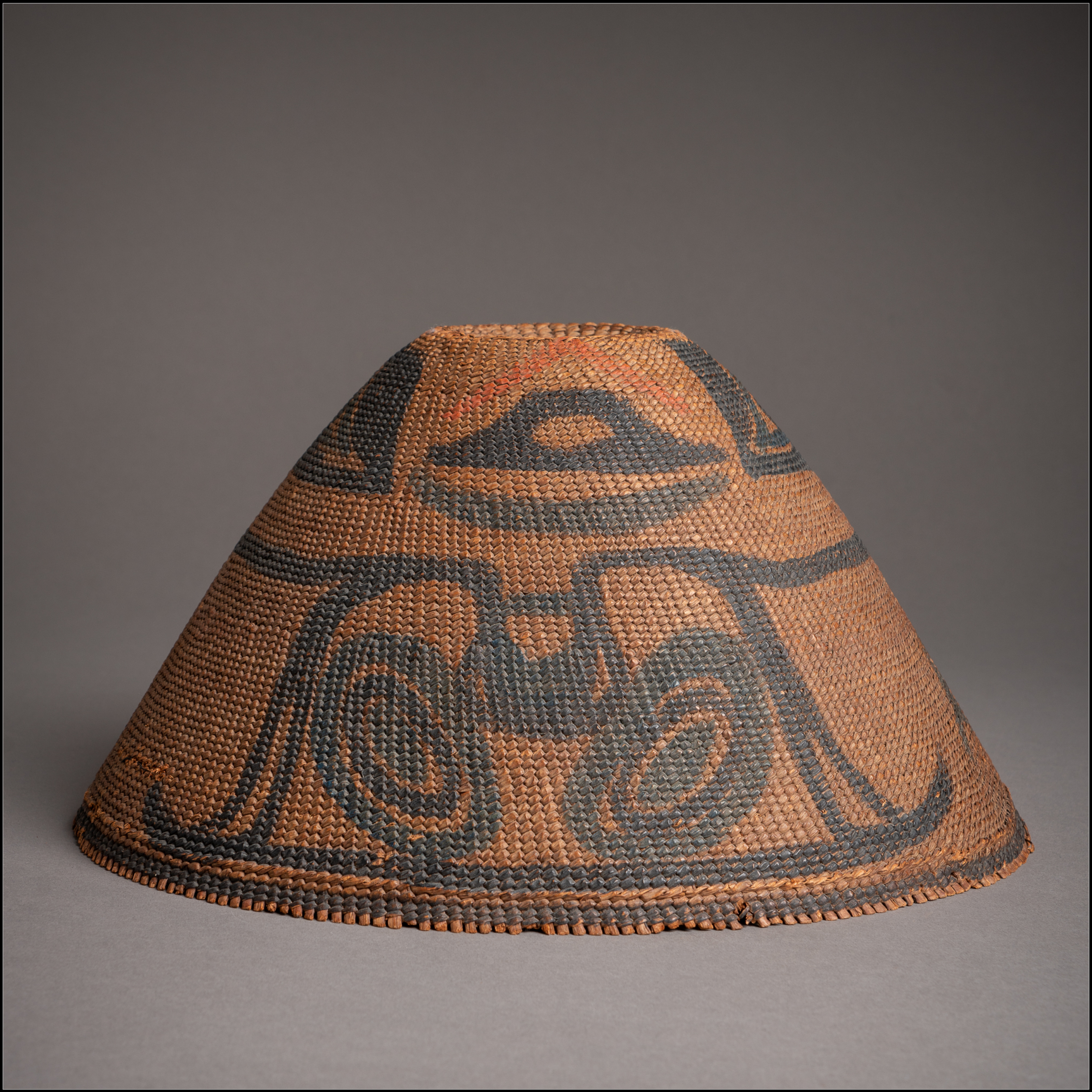
HAT

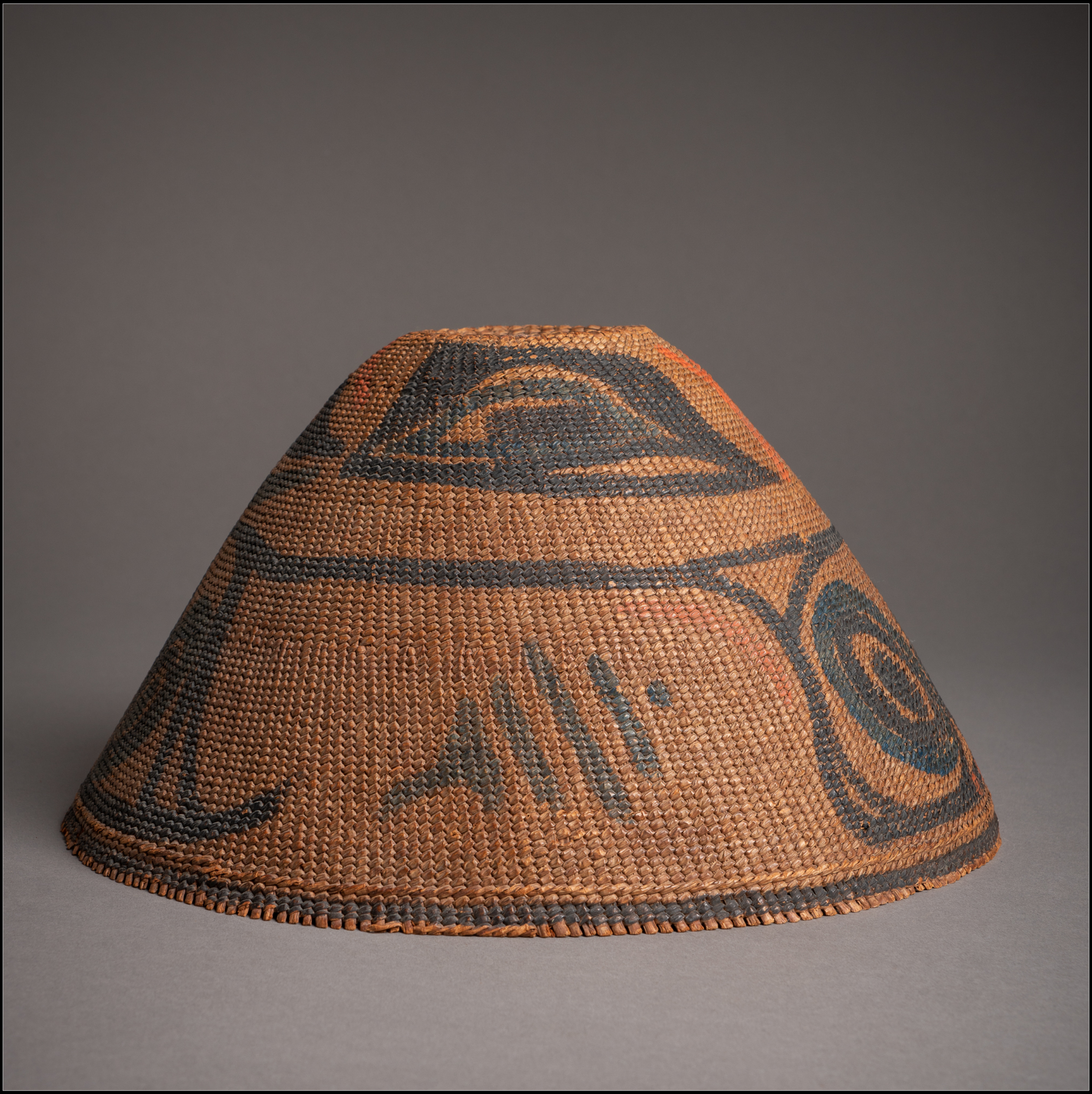
Nuu-Chah-Nulth (Nootka), Pacific Northwest

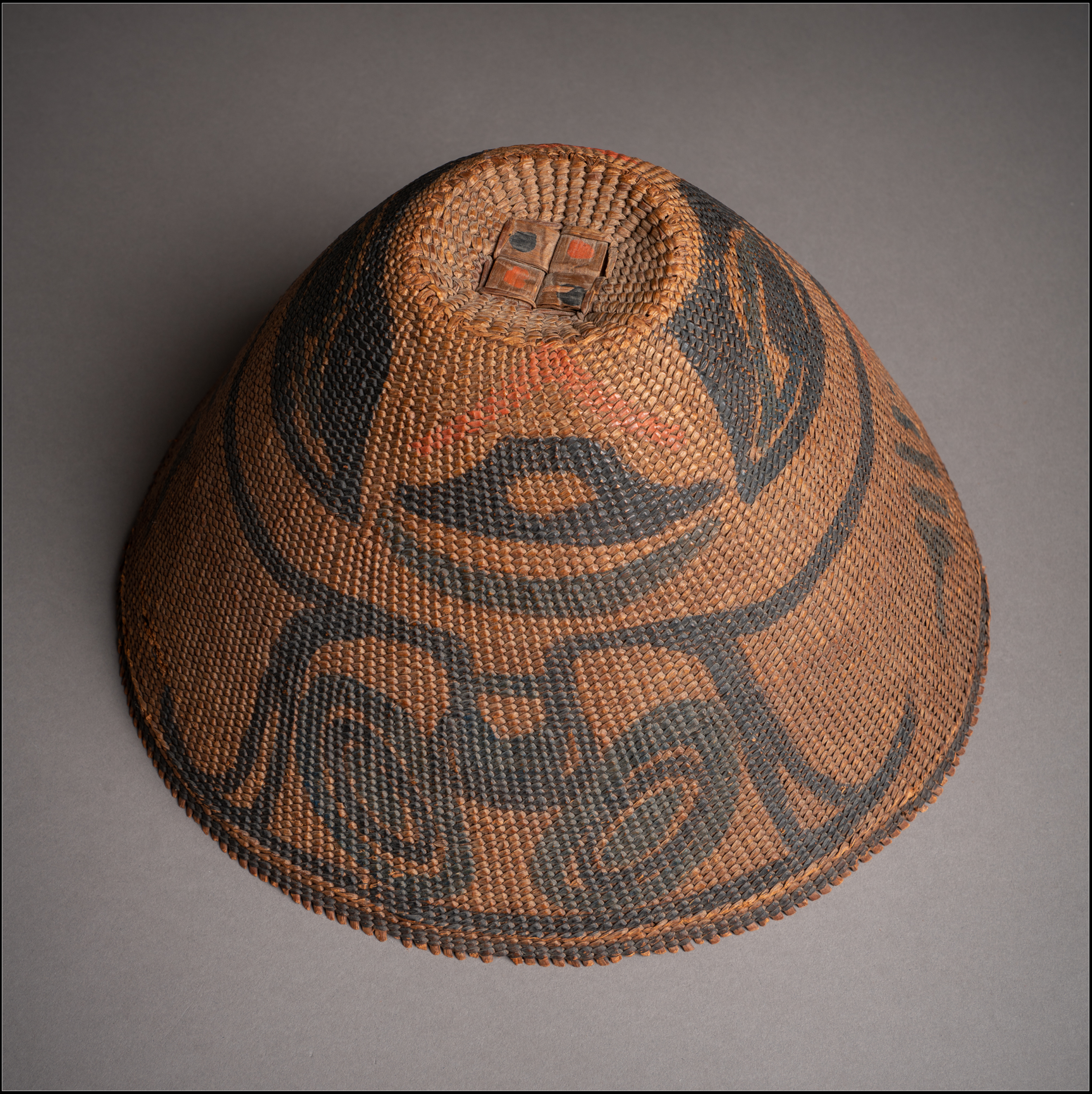
Circa 1875
8” h 11 1/2” w
Fiber, pigment
Provenance: Private US collection

Peaked woven hats were commonly found among the Nuu-Chah-Nulth (Nootka) of the southern Northwest Coast of North America. Some, like this example, were flat-topped, while others terminated in a conical knob. They often bore iconography of animals and hunting scenes, whether woven or painted, and might confer information about the wearer’s clan or personal history. Constructed of tightly woven cedar bark and beargrass, such hats provided excellent protection from the frequent rains of the Northwest Coast. The hat presented here features black and red animal motifs painted in the round.







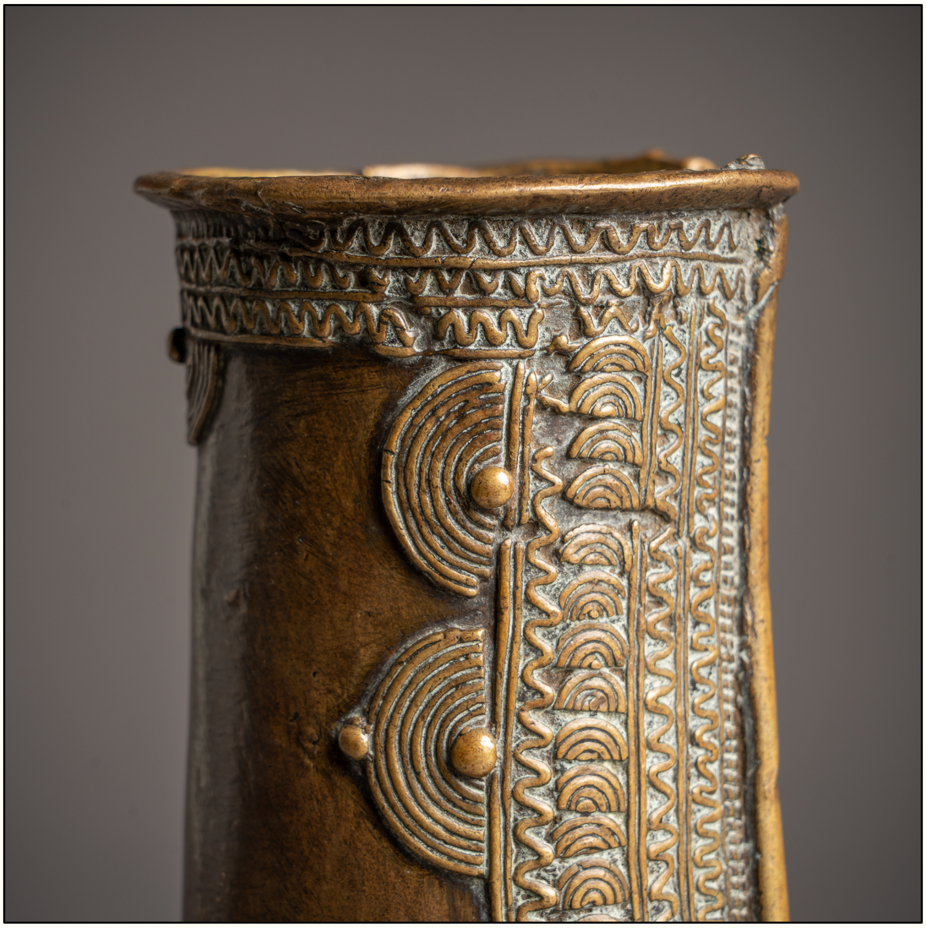


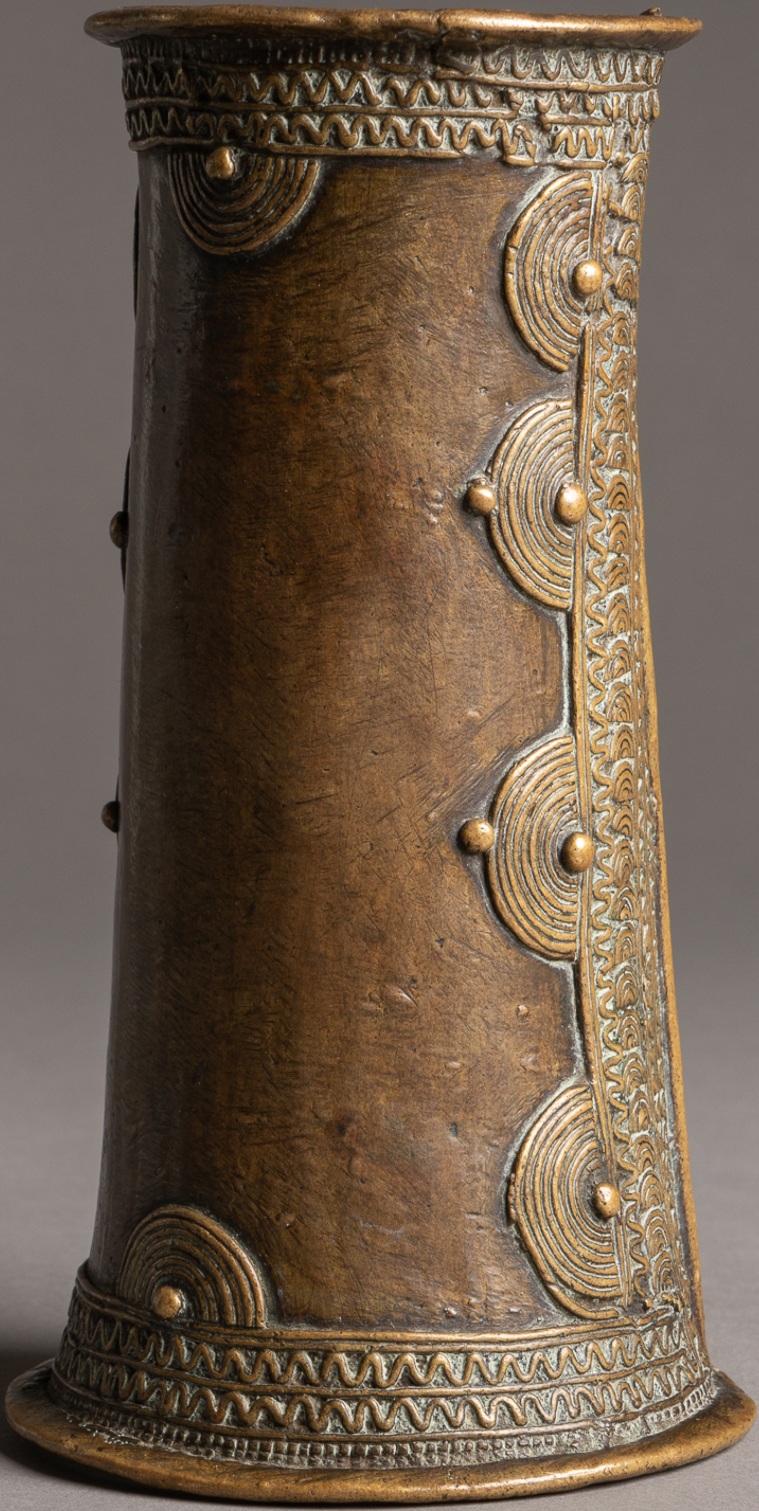
CUFF

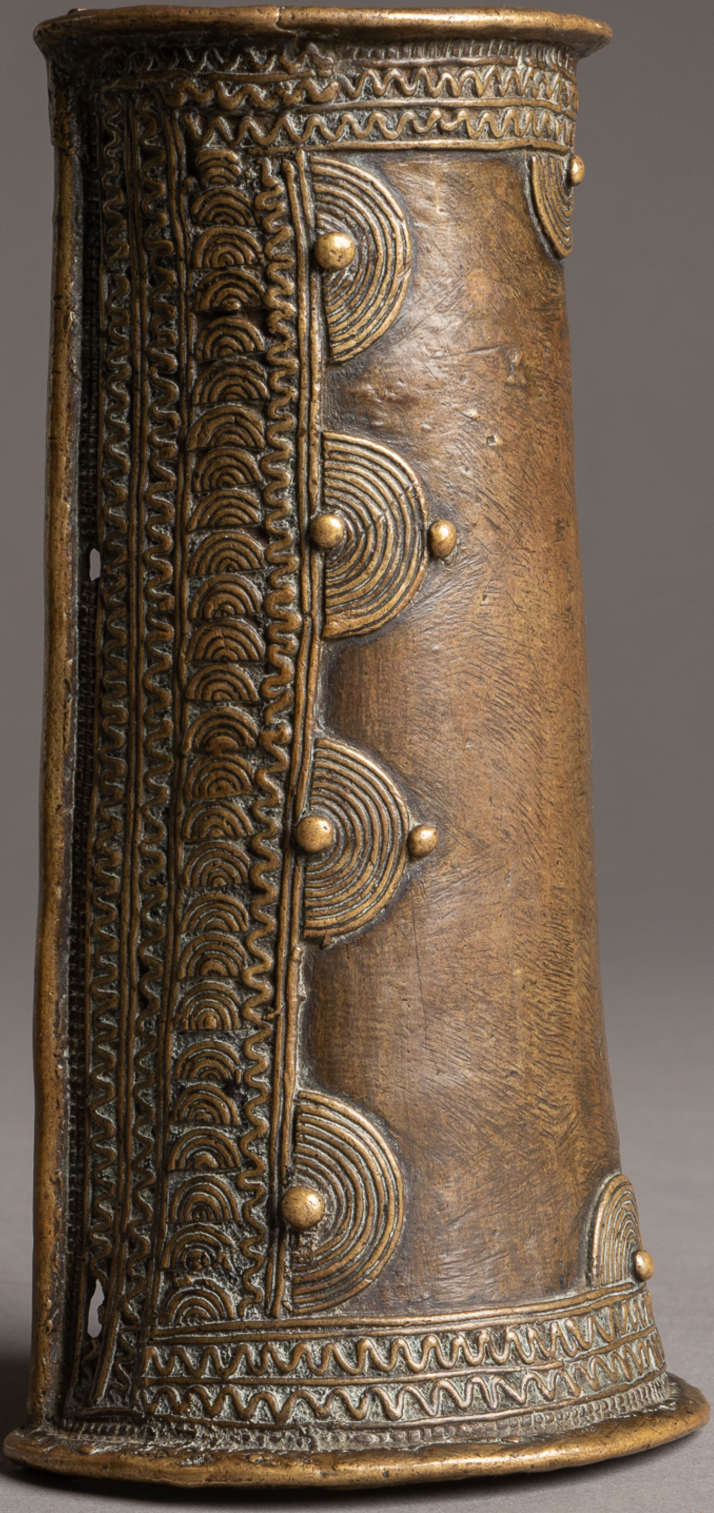
Nigeria

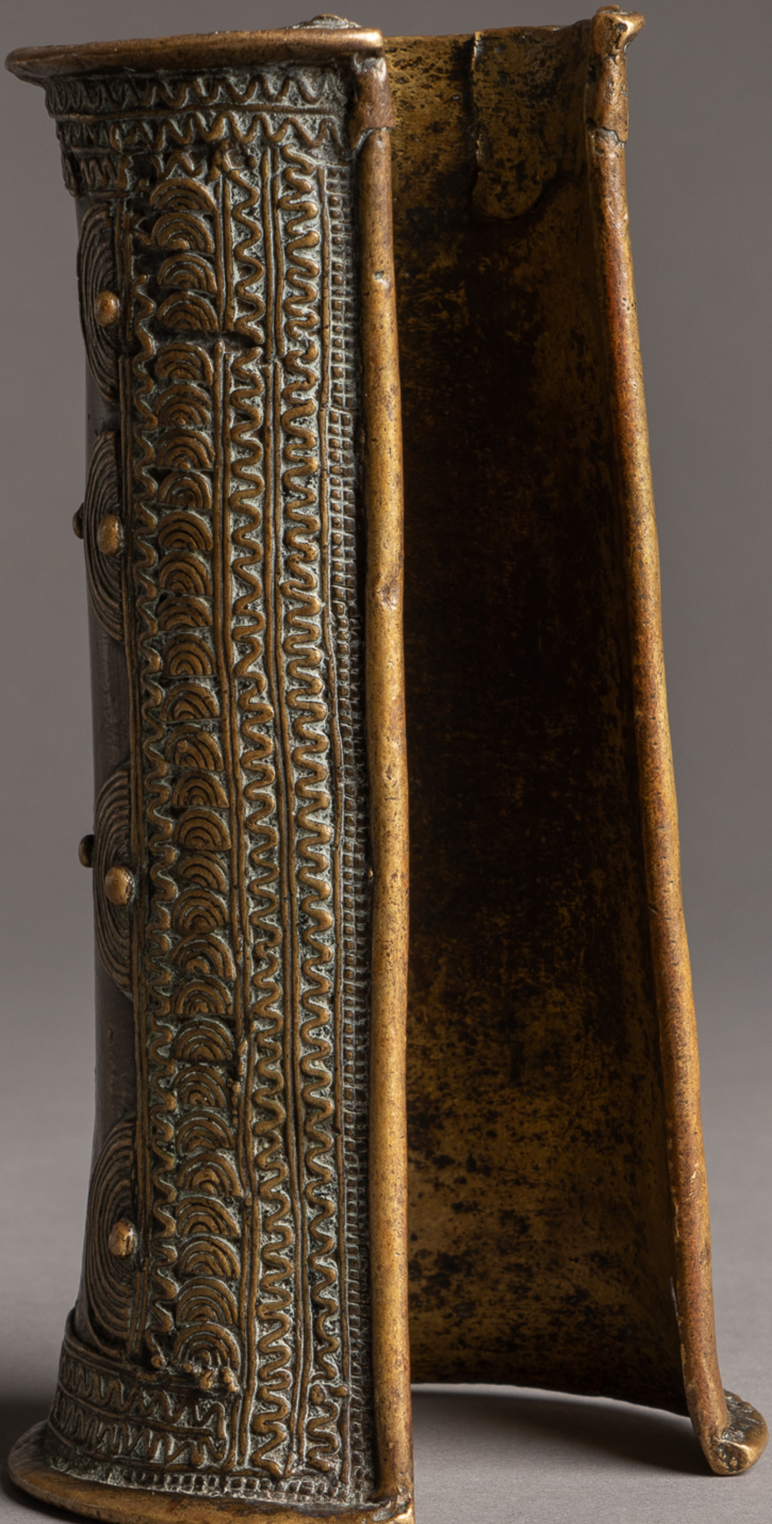
Early 20th century
7” h 3 1/2” w
Bronze
Provenance: Ex private US collection

Bronze armlets or cuffs were worn by select men in western Africa, granted by community leaders as symbols of status and recognition. Once donned, in some cases they might never be removed. Sometimes fashioned with simple ribs, at others with far more intricate designs incorporating human figures and faces, they are uniformly impressive pieces of traditional metalwork. This finely wrought cuff is adorned with textural borders of sinuous lines and concentric semicircle motifs, set off with small raised bosses.







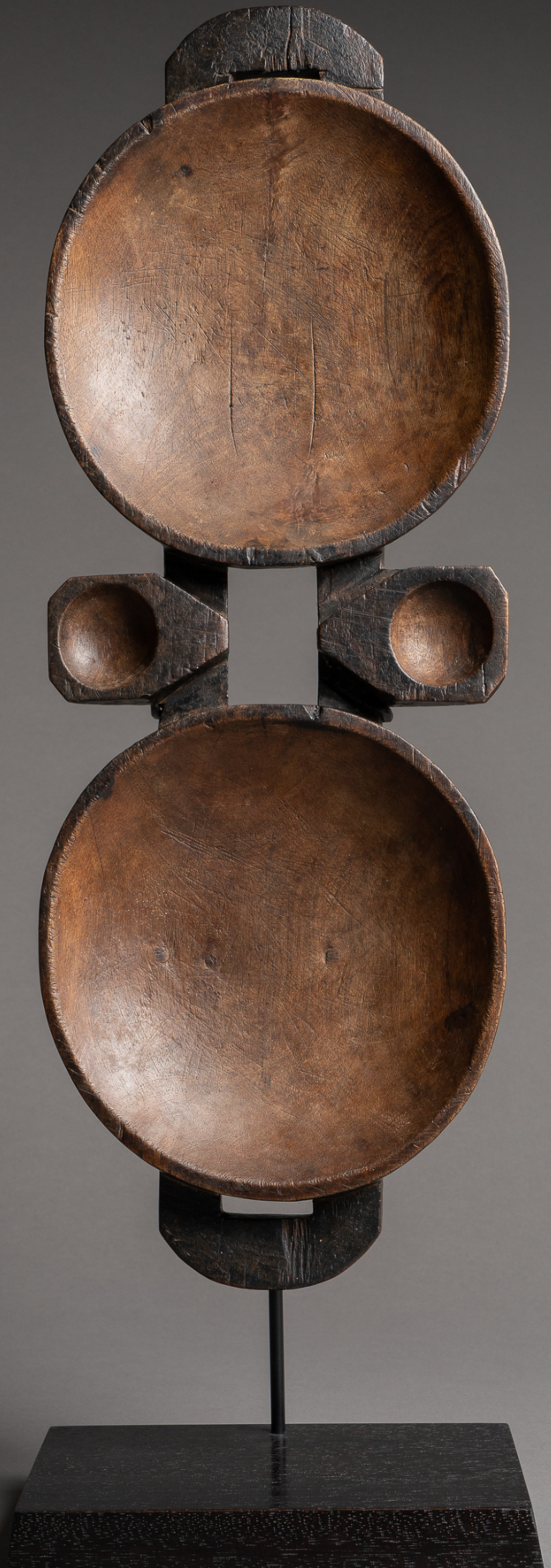


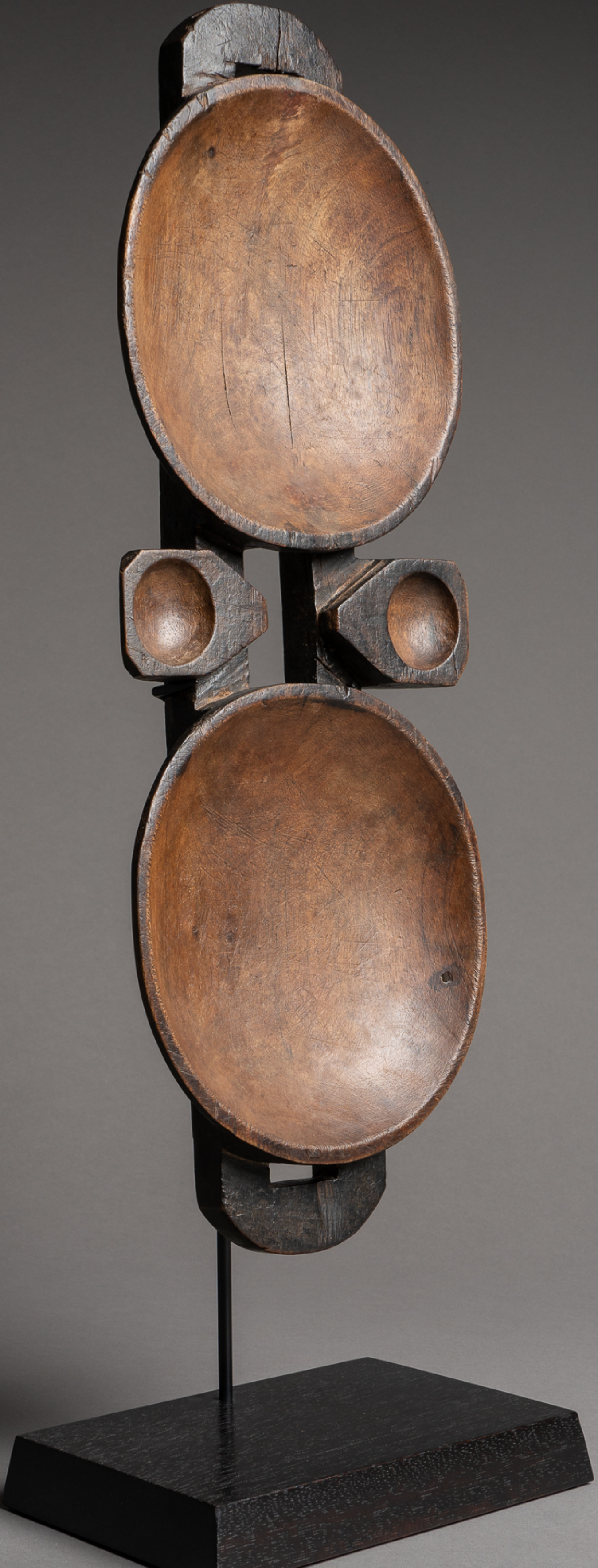
MEAT PLATTER

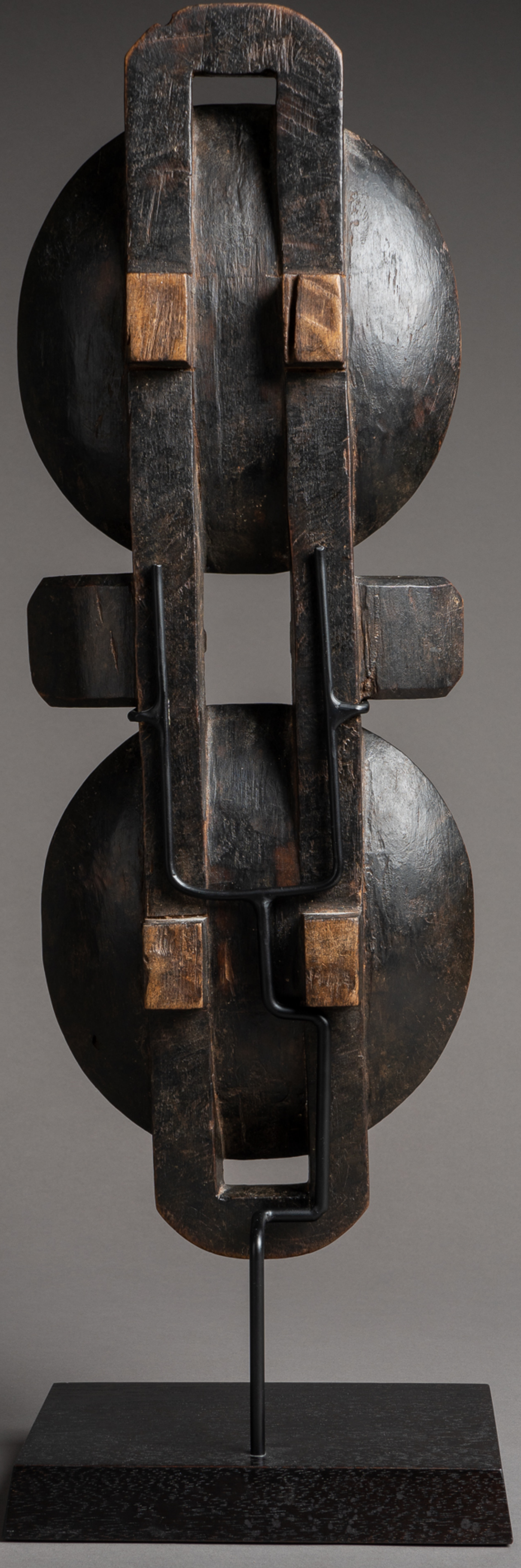
Zulu, South Africa

First half of 20th century
21” l 8” w
Wood, pokerwork
Provenance: Ex Dave Roberts, South Africa; Noble Endicott, New York

In South Africa, most ceremonies and rites were accompanied by a much-anticipated feast of grilled meat, shared by the assembled company from large platters. These platters were carved by men and were objects of both culinary function and careful aesthetic design. When not in use they would be hung as objects of display, with their undersides becoming the primary artistic focus. This platter, which features two large, ovular plates and a pair of small, detached circular dishes for condiments, presents a beautiful sense of geometric composition from both front and back. Distribution of light and dark is found in dramatic contrast on either side, the back side being highlighted with four small rectangles of light wood marking the platter’s feet.





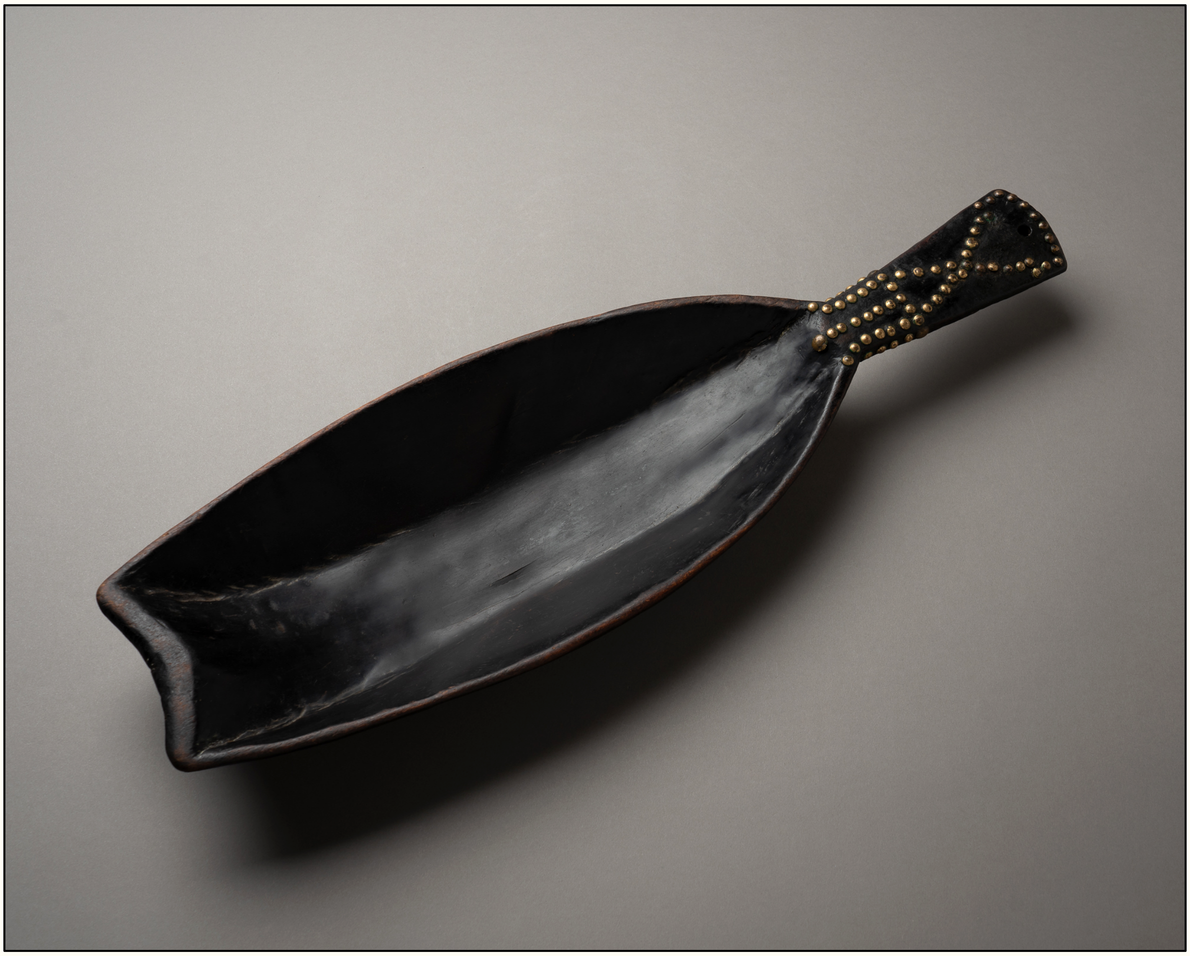


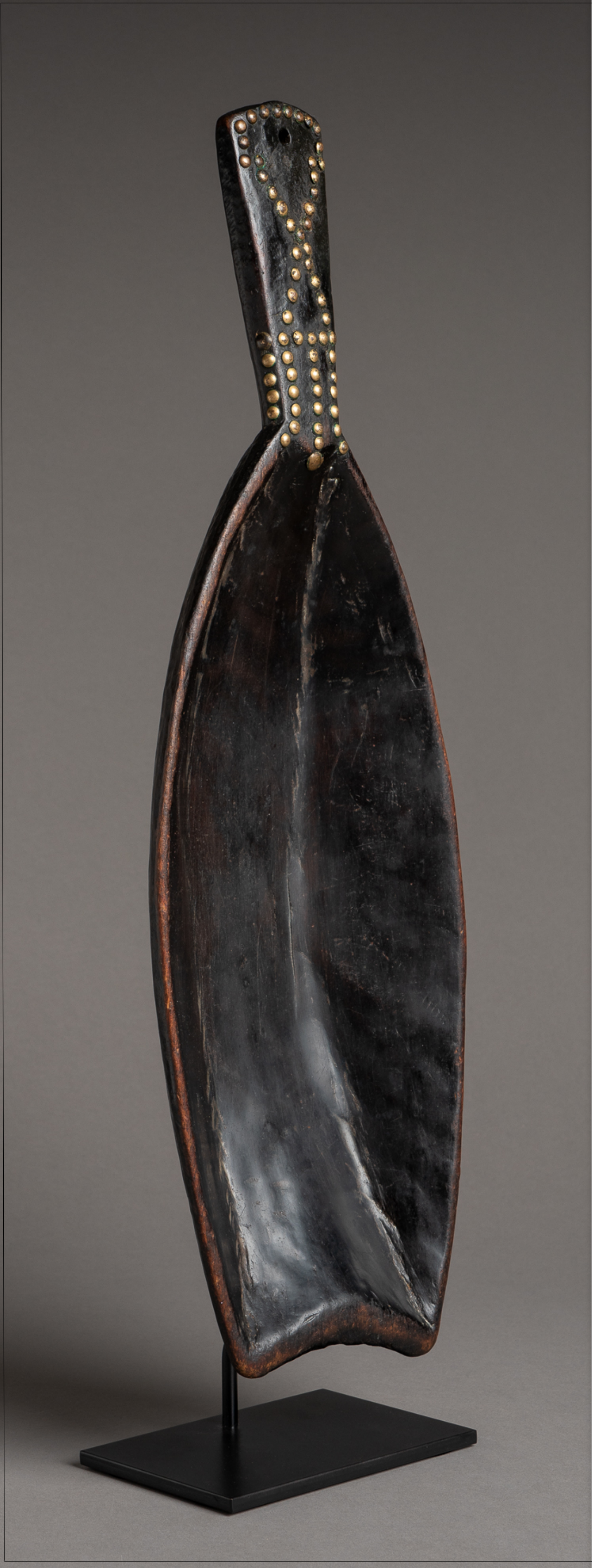
SPOON

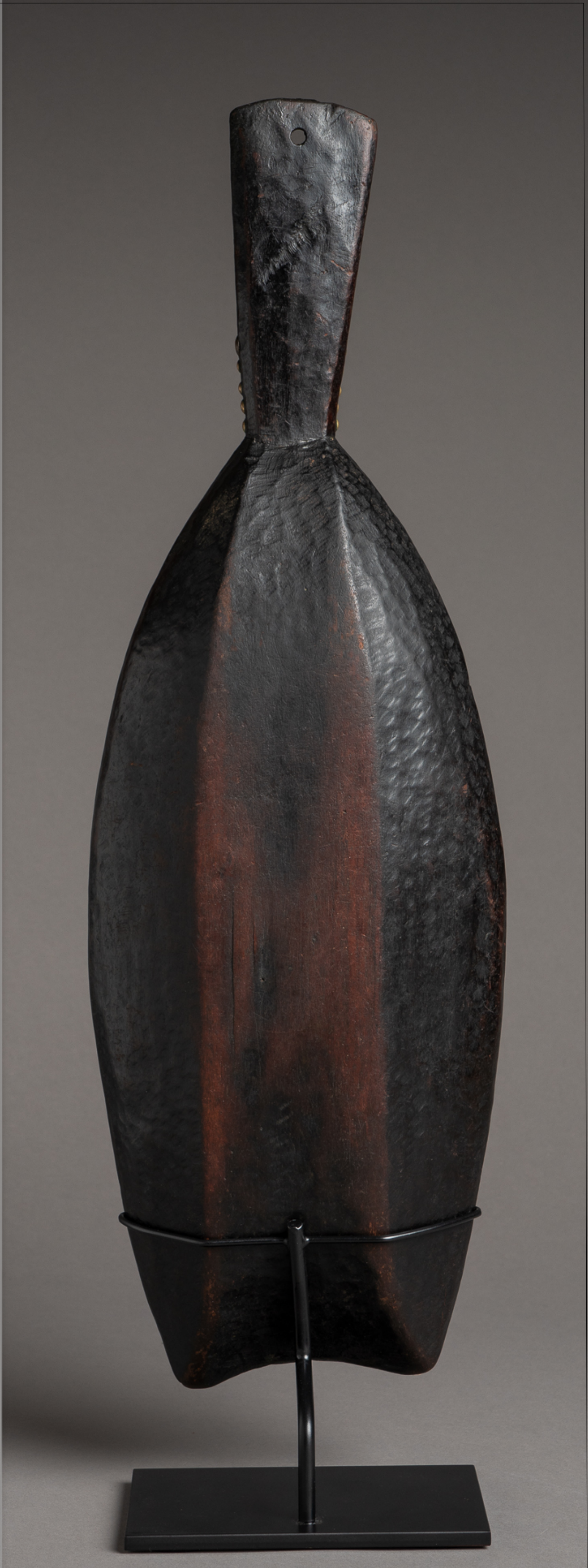
Mongo, D.R. Congo

Late 19th or early 20th century
22” l 7 1/4” w
Wood, brass tacks
Provenance: Ex private US collection

Prestige spoons are an artistic convention across Africa, and not least in the Congo, where this magnificent Mongo example was carved. With long, gently swelling flanks, a slightly wedge-shaped handle, and its concave, double-pointed tip, this spoon’s form can be read as that of an abstract fish. The handle, pierced with a suspension hole, is decorated with a design of brass tacks that provide a brilliant highlight to the deep, lustrous patina of the wood.





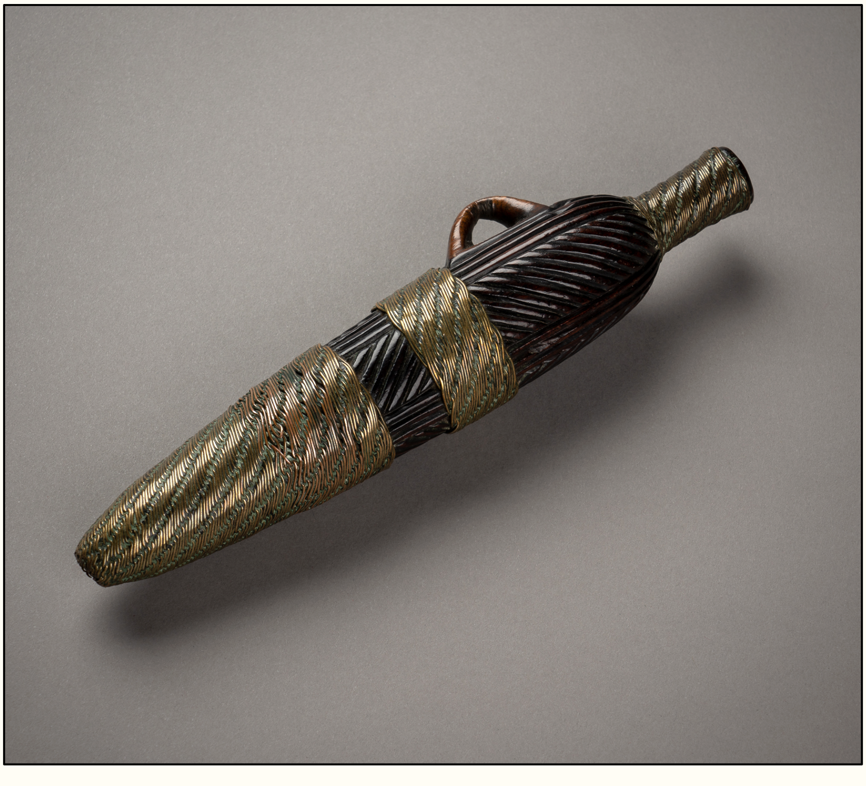


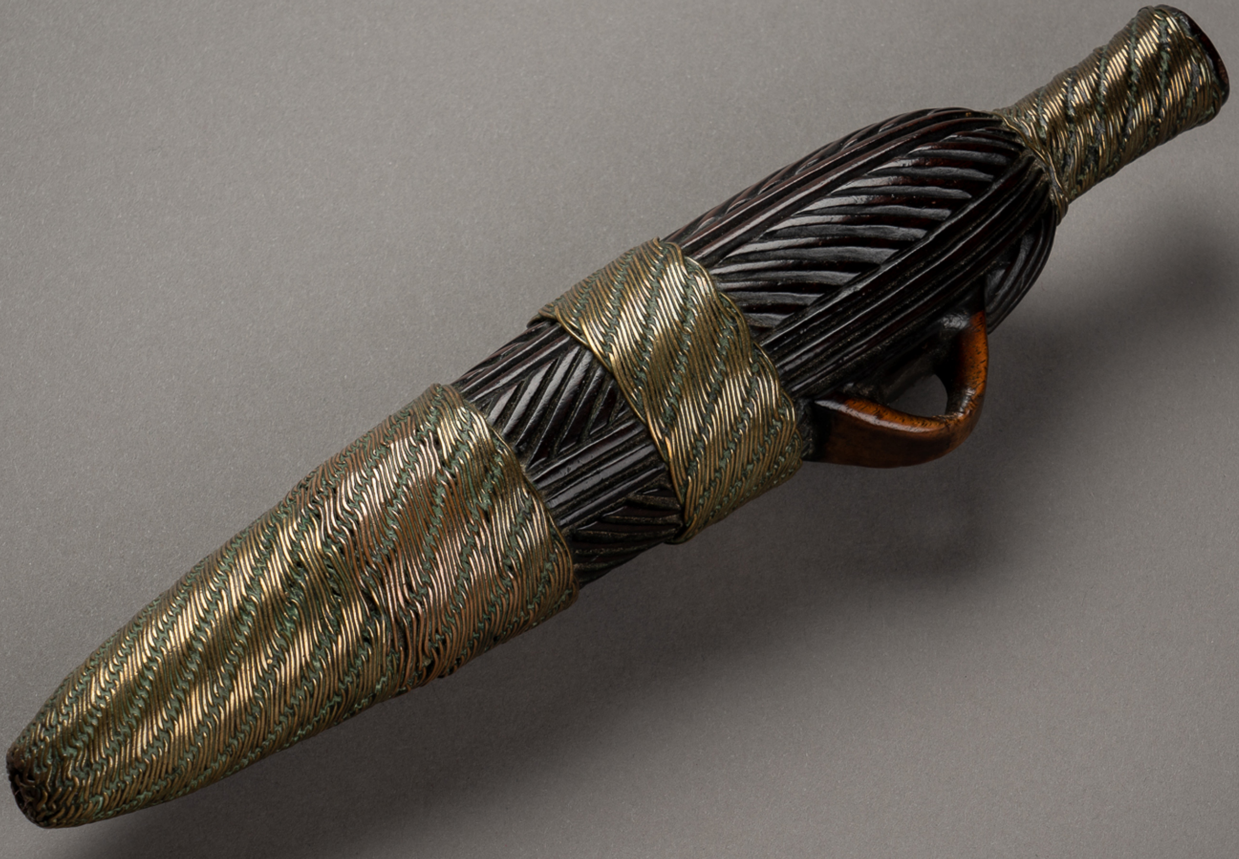
SNUFF CONTAINER

Shona, South Africa

Late 19th or early 20th century
8 1/2” l
Wood, brass wire
Provenance: Ex Seward Kennedy, London; Conru African and Oceanic Art
Published in *The Art of Southeast Africa*, Kevin Conru, p. 65

The taking of tobacco was an integral component of gatherings both great and small in the traditional societies of southern Africa. Tobacco had associations with procreation, creating favorable conditions for growth and fertility, and was a powerful aid in communicating with the ancestors. Snuff containers were one of the most ubiquitous personal objects in the region, carved and decorated with delightful stylistic variety. This snuff container, with its classic Shona silhouette, is enhanced by brilliant wrappings of brass wire that contrast beautifully with bands of linear incisions in the dark wood of its elongated body. At over eight inches in length, this piece is an unusually large example of it type.



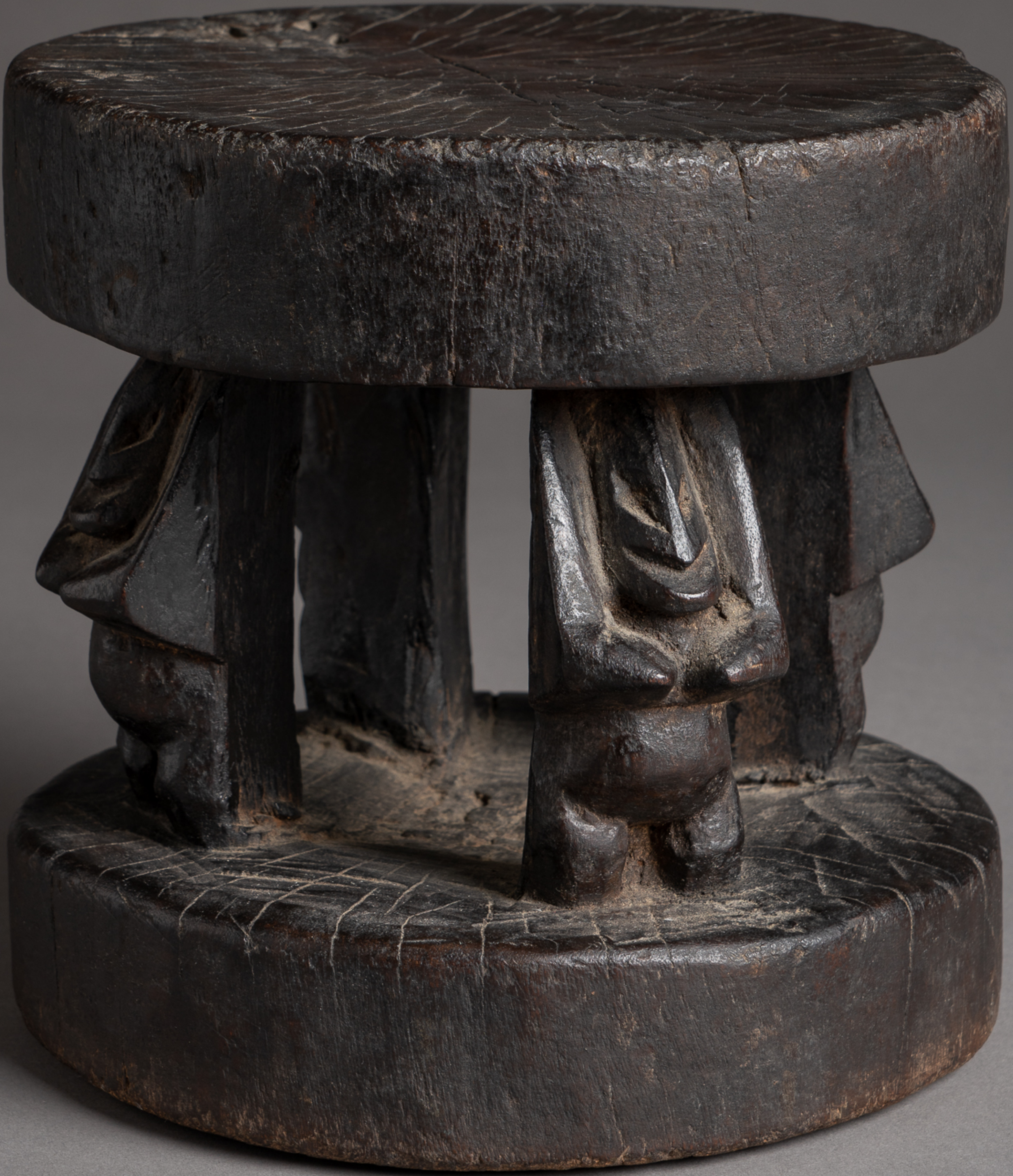


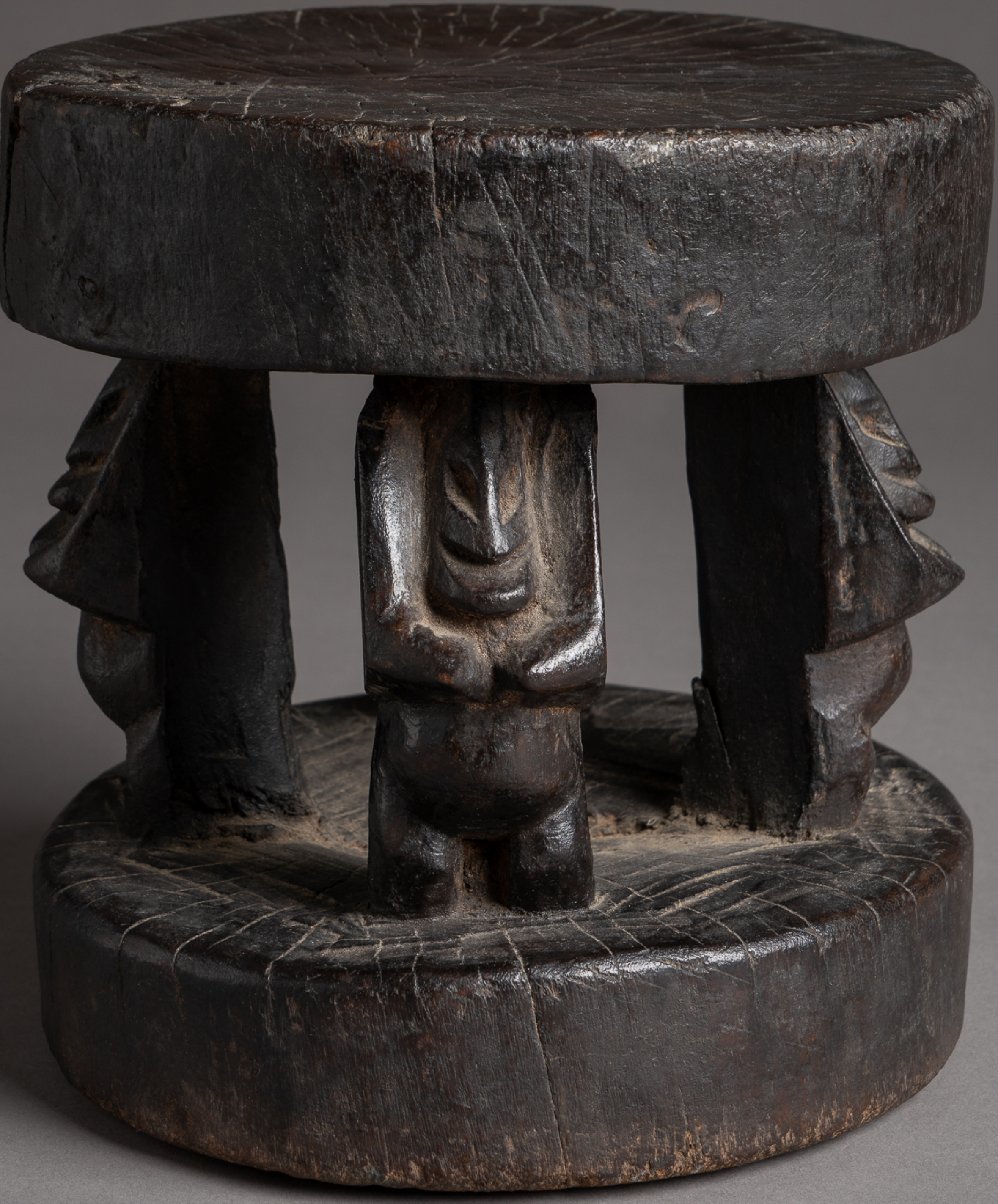
STOOL

Dogon, Mali

Late 19th century
7 1/2” h 7 1/2” w
Wood
Provenance: Private US collection

Stools designed as a pair of discs joined by four columnar figures are a hallmark of Dogon wood carving tradition. While examples meant for utility have featureless, angled supports, more elaborate ceremonial stools bear two pairs of figures representing mythological ancestor spirits with cosmological significance. Figural stools were owned primarily by *hogon*, the highest-ranking leaders of religious and political life in Dogon society. Stout, strong proportions and a dark patina give this figural stool a powerful sculptural presence. In contrast with the elongated, more naturalistic body forms found in the most detailed Dogon stools, the figures here are more abstract and compact, echoing the outward-bending angles of simpler stools with thrusting elbows and arms.





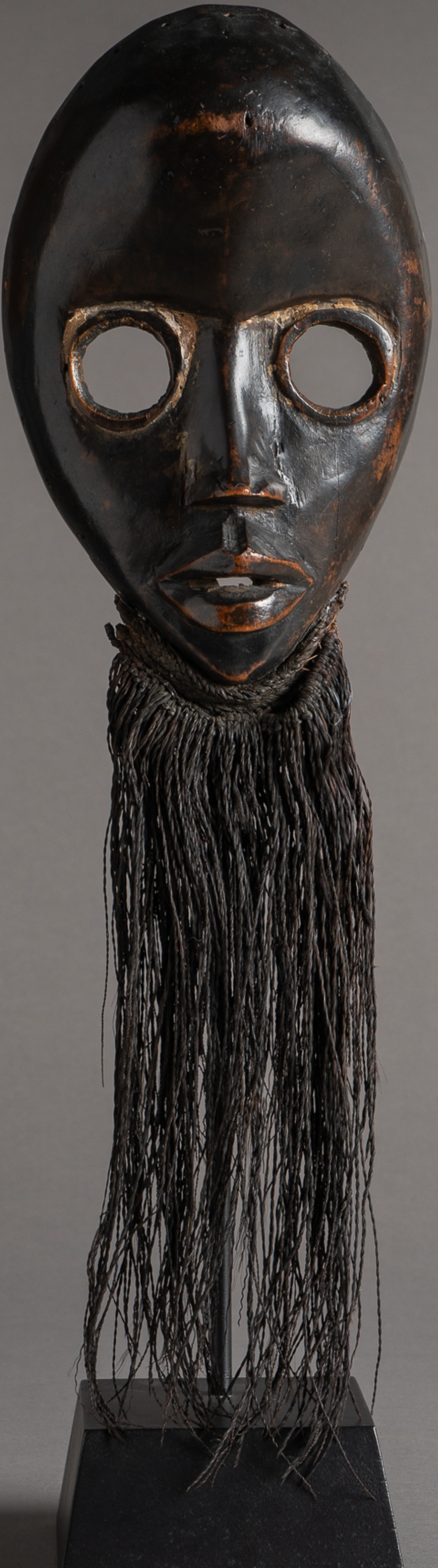
MASK, GUNYE GE

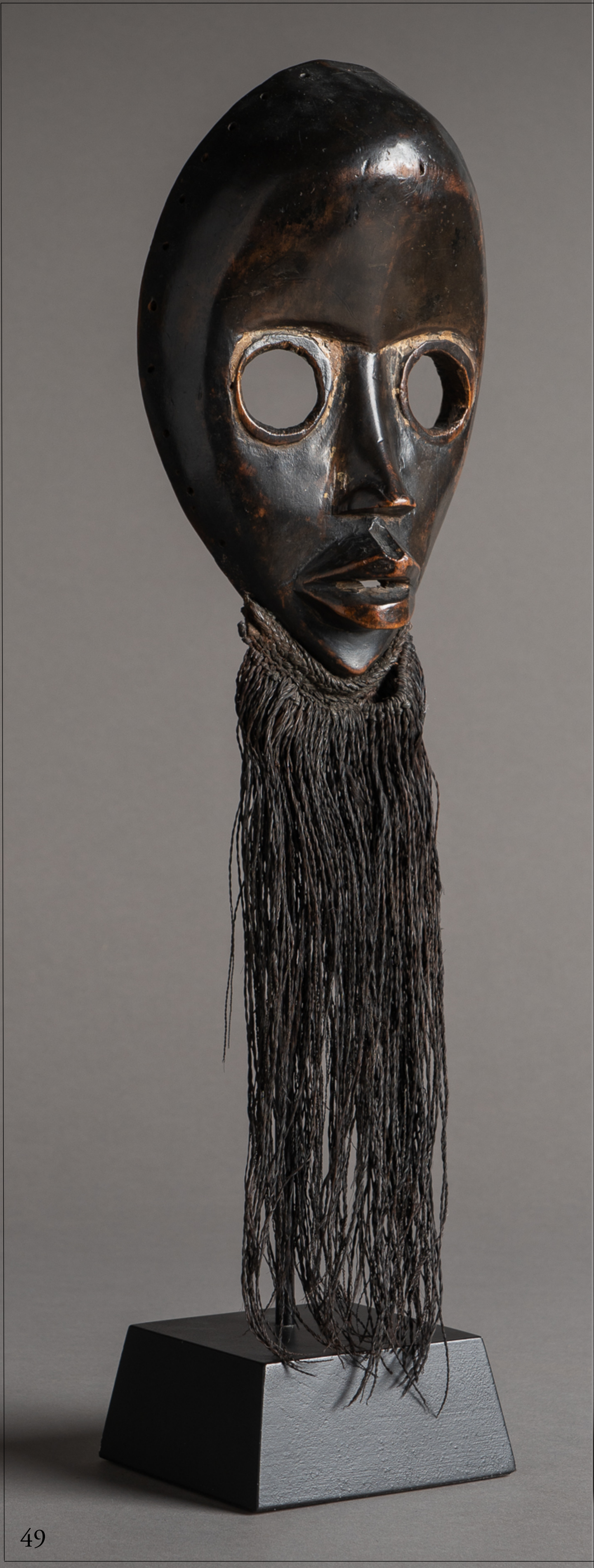
Dan, Liberia

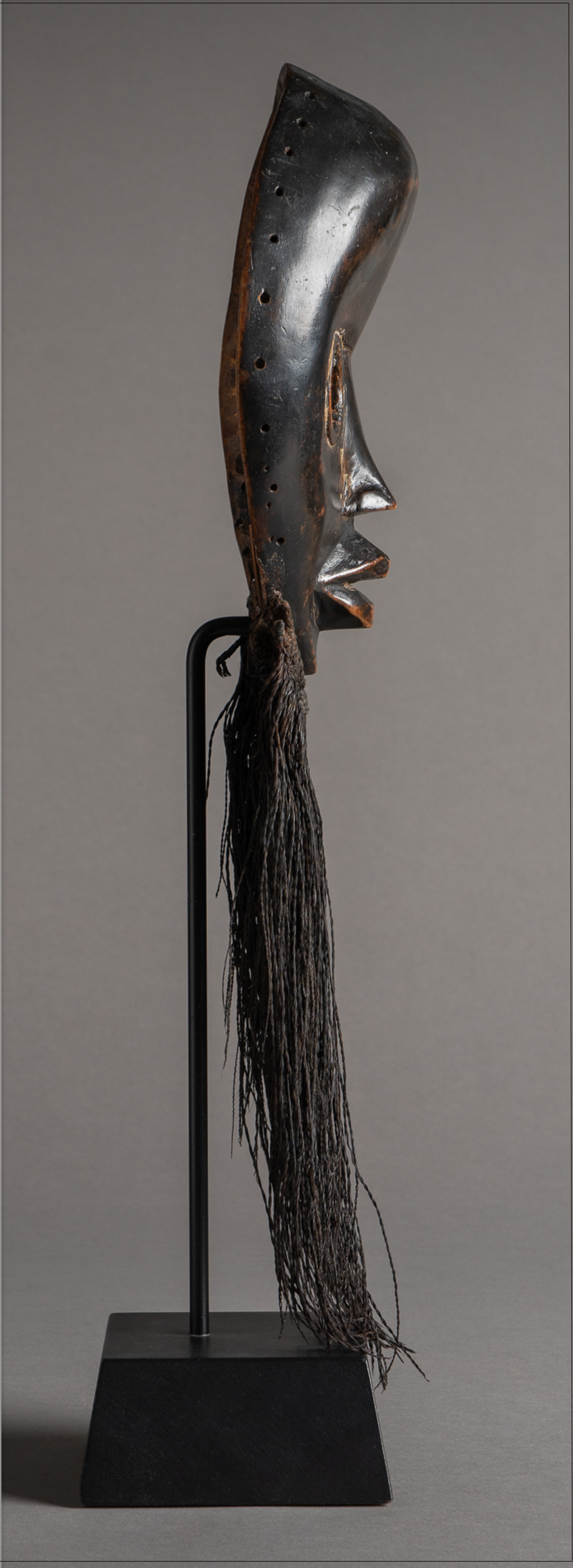
Late 19th or early 20th century
8 1/2” h (17” h incl. beard) 4 1/2” w
Wood, fiber
Provenance: Ex Myron Kunin; private US collection

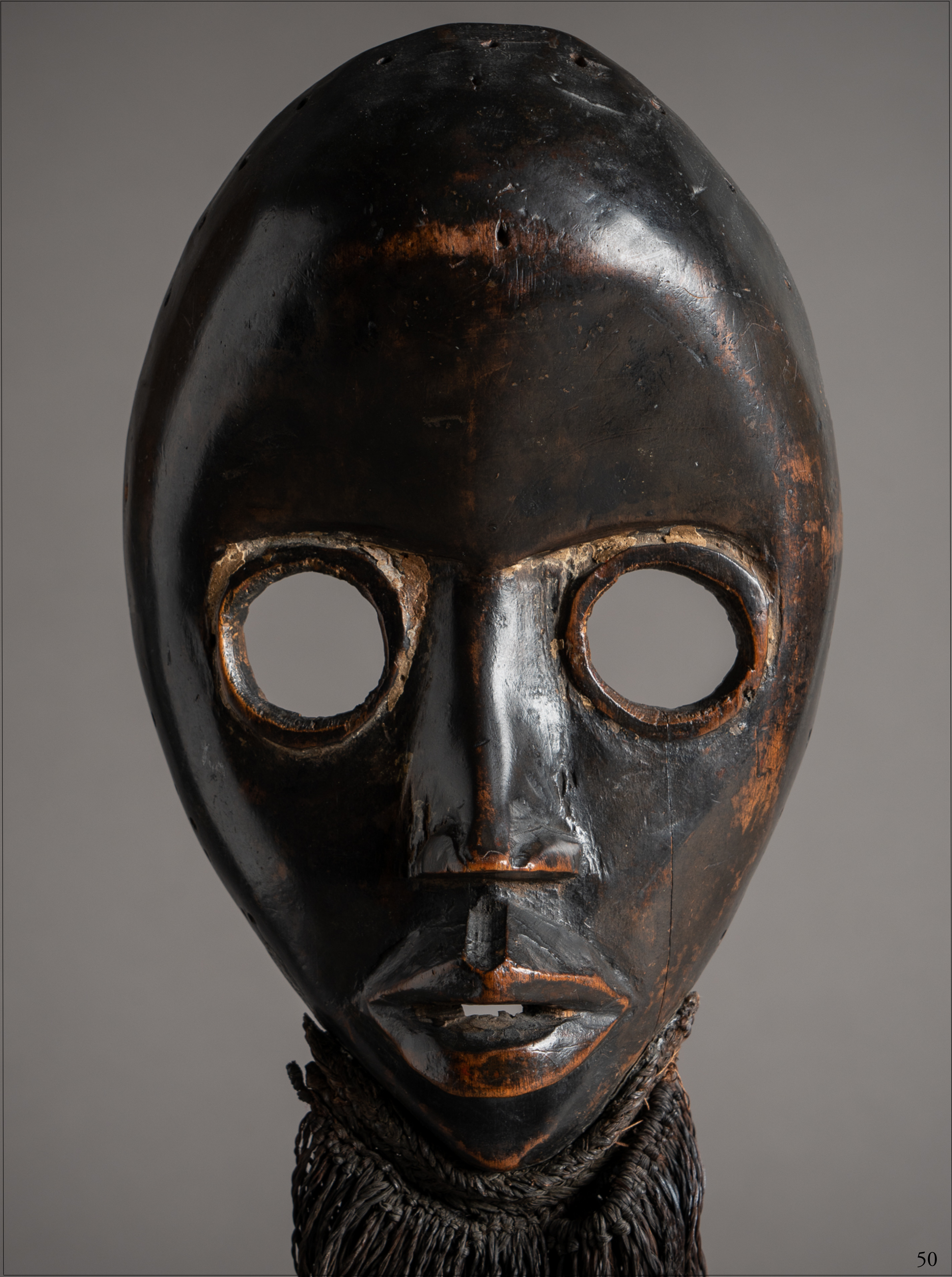
Dan masks are embodiments of *gle* or *ge*, discorporate spirits who wish to communicate with and aid human communities but who lack a physical form. Materialized in masks inspired through dream messages, they thus attain the power to achieve their desires through the medium of masquerade. This mask is referred to as *gunye ge* and appears for the running of ritual races. Though in previous eras *gunye ge* may have figured in martial training for men, in modern times it changes hands as a kind of trophy to the fastest runner in the ceremonial chase.

This *gunye ge* is a classic example of its type, featuring a delicate oval face dominated by wide, circular, staring eyes that afford clear vision to the runner. Its other trademarks – a high, prominent brow, pointed nose and full lips – are here joined by a full and well-preserved beard. Warm highlights to the mask’s dark patina accentuate the structures of mouth, nose and eyes and bring increased dimensionality to an already outstanding piece of canonical Dan carving.







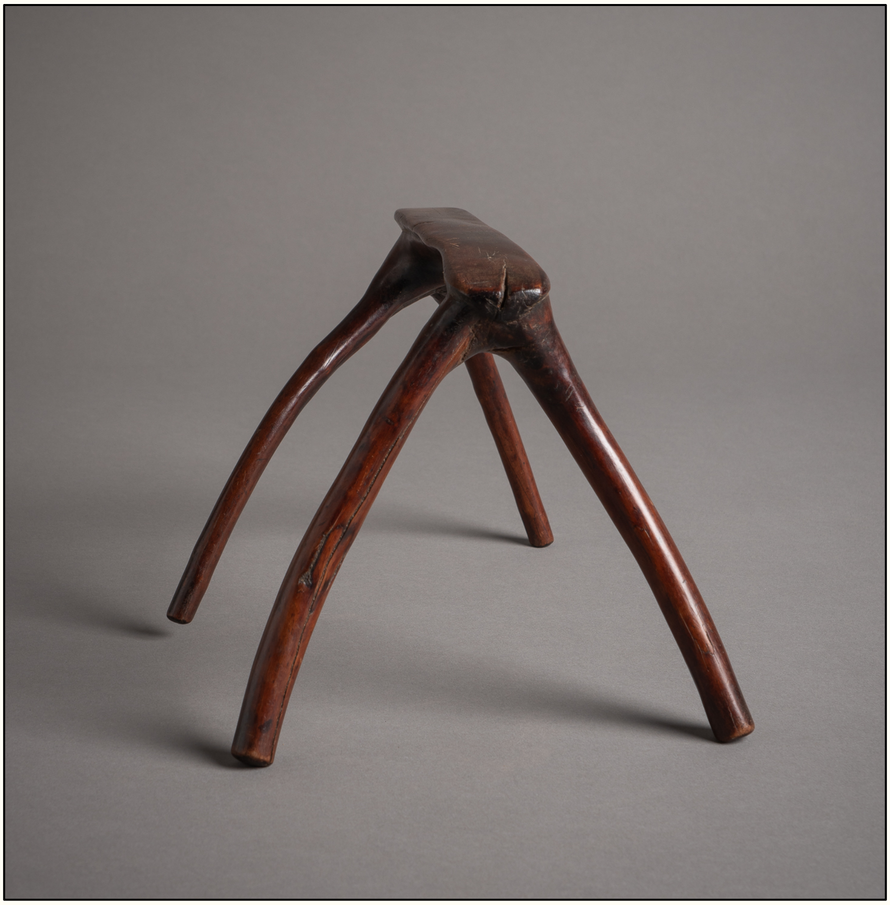


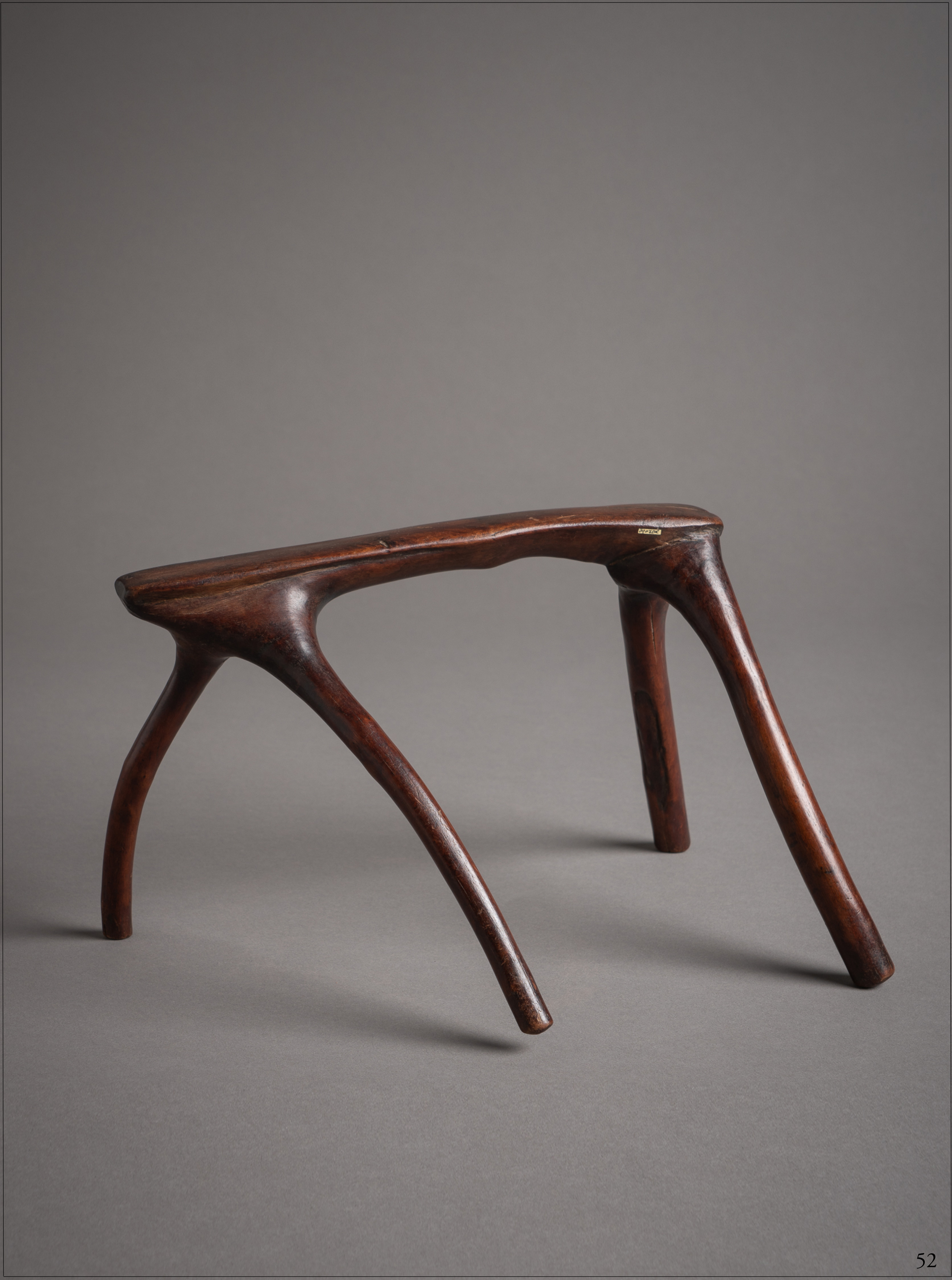
HEADREST

East Africa

Early 20th century
10” l 7” h
Wood
Provenance: Ex Galerie Monbrison; Sheikh Saud-al-Thani

Hardwood trees with specific branch configurations were sought out by East African carvers to create headrests like this one. Placed horizontally, the arrangement of the branches suggests a stylized animal form with three or four slender legs. Such headrests would be kept for many years by their owners as highly valued personal items. This particularly elegant four-legged example is graced with a smooth, lustrous surface and shows edges rounded with significant age and use.





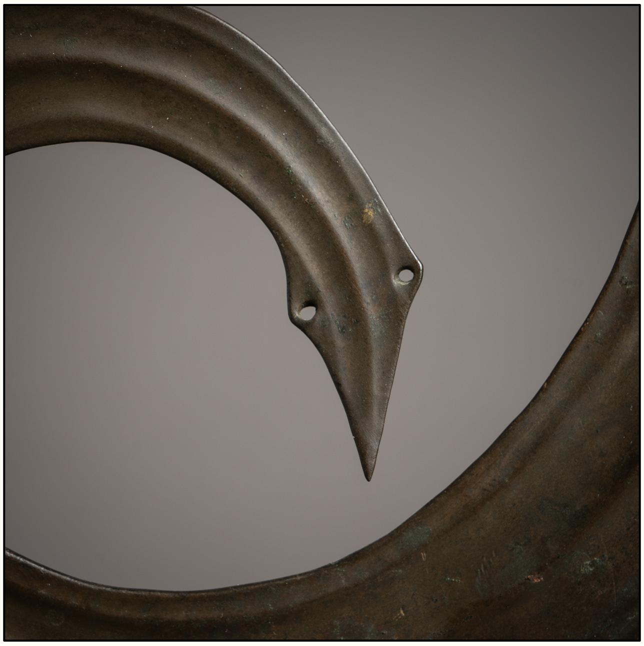
HEAD ORNAMENT, *SANGGORI*

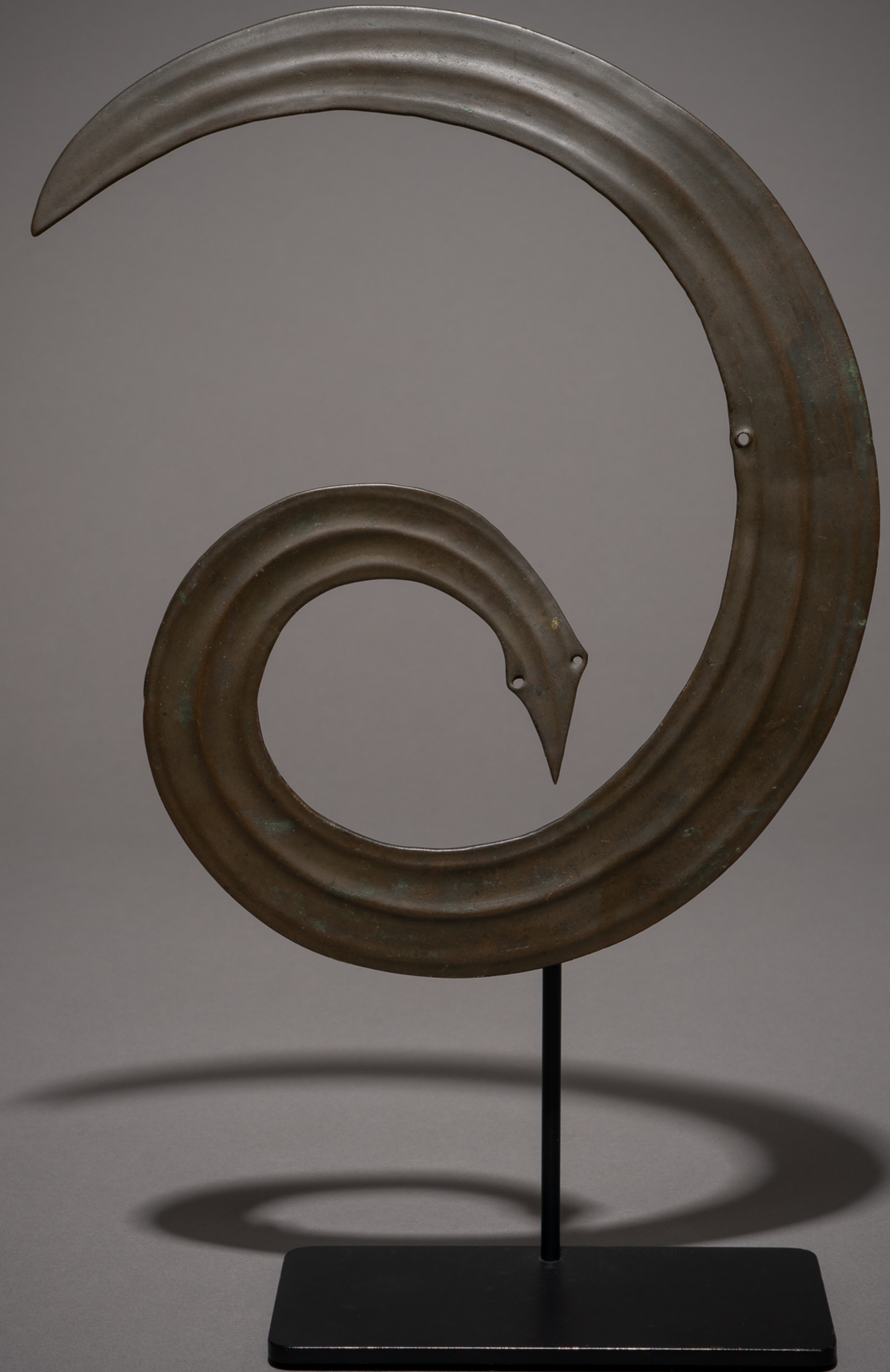
Sulawesi

19th century
9 1/2” h 7 3/4” w
Brass
Provenance: Ex private California collection; Joel Cooner Gallery; Bruce Frank Primitive Art

The *sanggori* is a brass head ornament from Central Sulawesi, with roots extending back to the late Bronze Age in Indonesia. Its distinctive form, like that of a tightly curled blade, suggests a serpent, one of the oldest motifs in the Austronesian cultural sphere and one with powerful associations to the underworld. Later influences may have included the *Naga* snake and the dragon.

Balanced vertically on the top of the wearer’s head and attached to a head wrapping, the *sanggori* was traditionally worn by chieftains during ceremonies and in battle, believed to bestow magical protective powers on its wearer. Like all ornaments from Sulawesi, it signified prestige and social status, and was sometimes worn by aristocrats during ritual festivals.



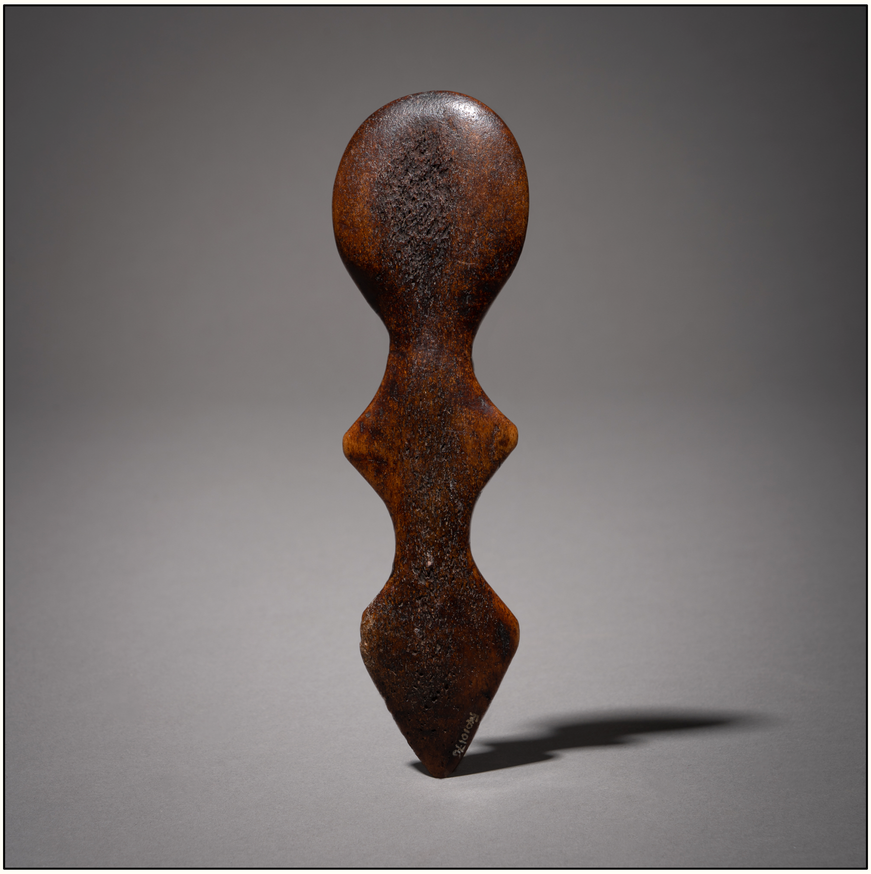


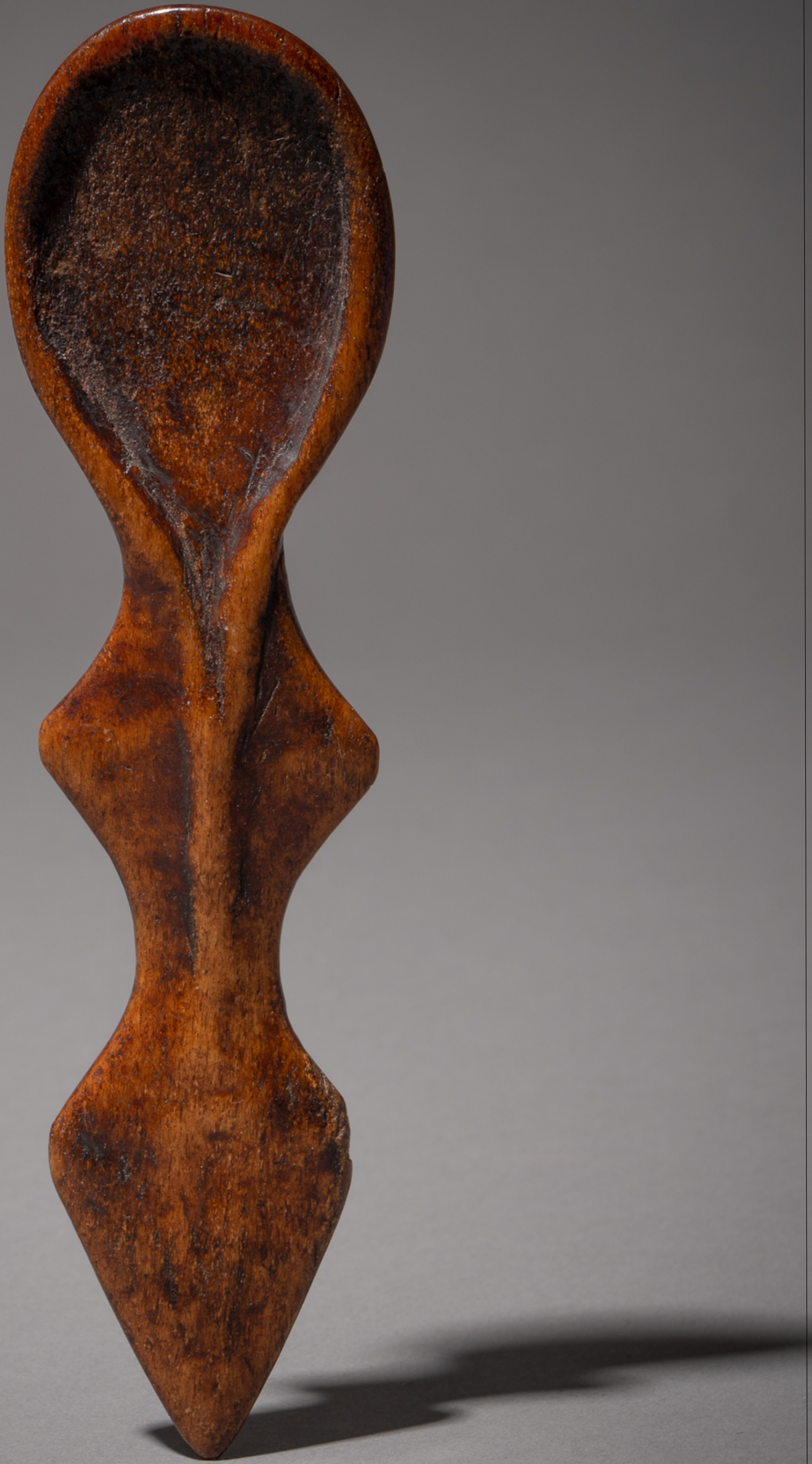
SPOON

Lega, D.R. Congo

Late 19th or early 20th century
7 1/4” h 2” w
Bone
Provenance: Ex Marc Felix, Brussels; Noble Endicott, New York

A lovely Lega spoon with a shallow bowl and deep, warm patina. With its rhythmic curves and bilateral symmetry, the design of this spoon communicates a strong anthropomorphic character and a lovely figurative grace. The gentle edges of the bowl, lightened by use, trace back beyond the neck of the spoon to join and disappear at the “navel” of the handle. Highly stylized spoons of this type figure significantly in the rites and symbolism of the Bwami society, a hierarchical group that plays a strong political and educational role in Lega communities.





DAGGER

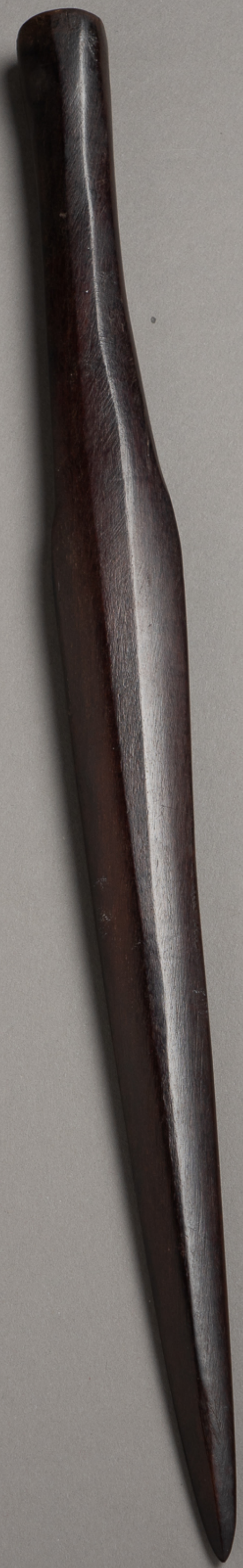
Hawaii

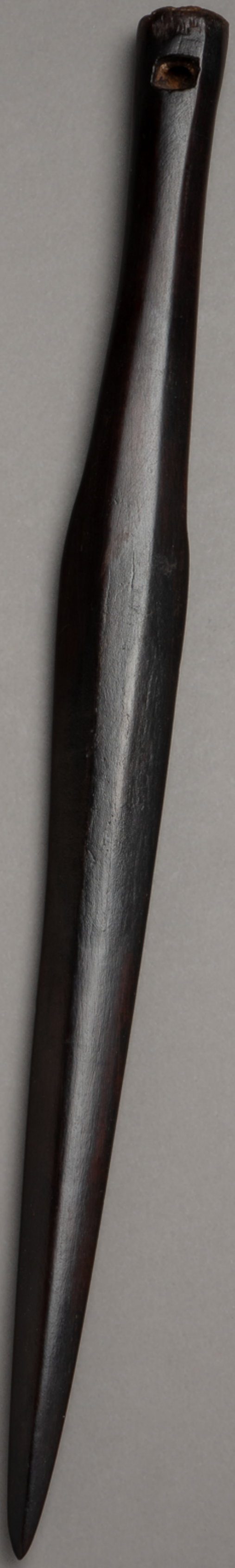
18th century
18” l
Wood
Provenance: Ex private Hawaii collection (Big Island); Sotheby’s Paris, December 4, 2008; Sheikh Saud-al-Thani

Hawaiian carvers, like many across Oceania, traditionally produced a variety of one- and two-handed melée weapons from hardwood and other natural materials found in the islands of the Pacific. The straight, narrow dagger offered here is carved from a single piece of wood, the handle merging seamlessly with the blade. Thus unified, they present a lovely, unbroken form with subtly shifting surface planes and an elegant silhouette. A suspension hole, bored in an unusual L-shape into the side of the grip and out the bottom end, is found at the base of the dagger.

In 1778, during his stay in Kauai, the first of the Hawaiian islands which he discovered, Captain James Cook noted that: *'besides their spears or lances, made of a fine chestnut coloured wood, beautifully polished, some of which are barbed at one end, and flattened to a point at the other, they have a sort of weapon which we had never seen before, and not mentioned by any navigator, as used by the natives of the South Sea. It is somewhat like a dagger; in general, about a foot and a half long, sharpened at one or both ends, and secured to the hand by a string. Its use is to stab in close fight; and it seems well adapted to the purpose.'* (Cook, 1784, vol. 2: 247).

After the eighteenth century, wooden daggers began to be abandoned in favor of iron blades, which Europeans used as trade goods. The majority of known daggers of this kind were collected during Cook's third voyage, and are now held in Western museums.





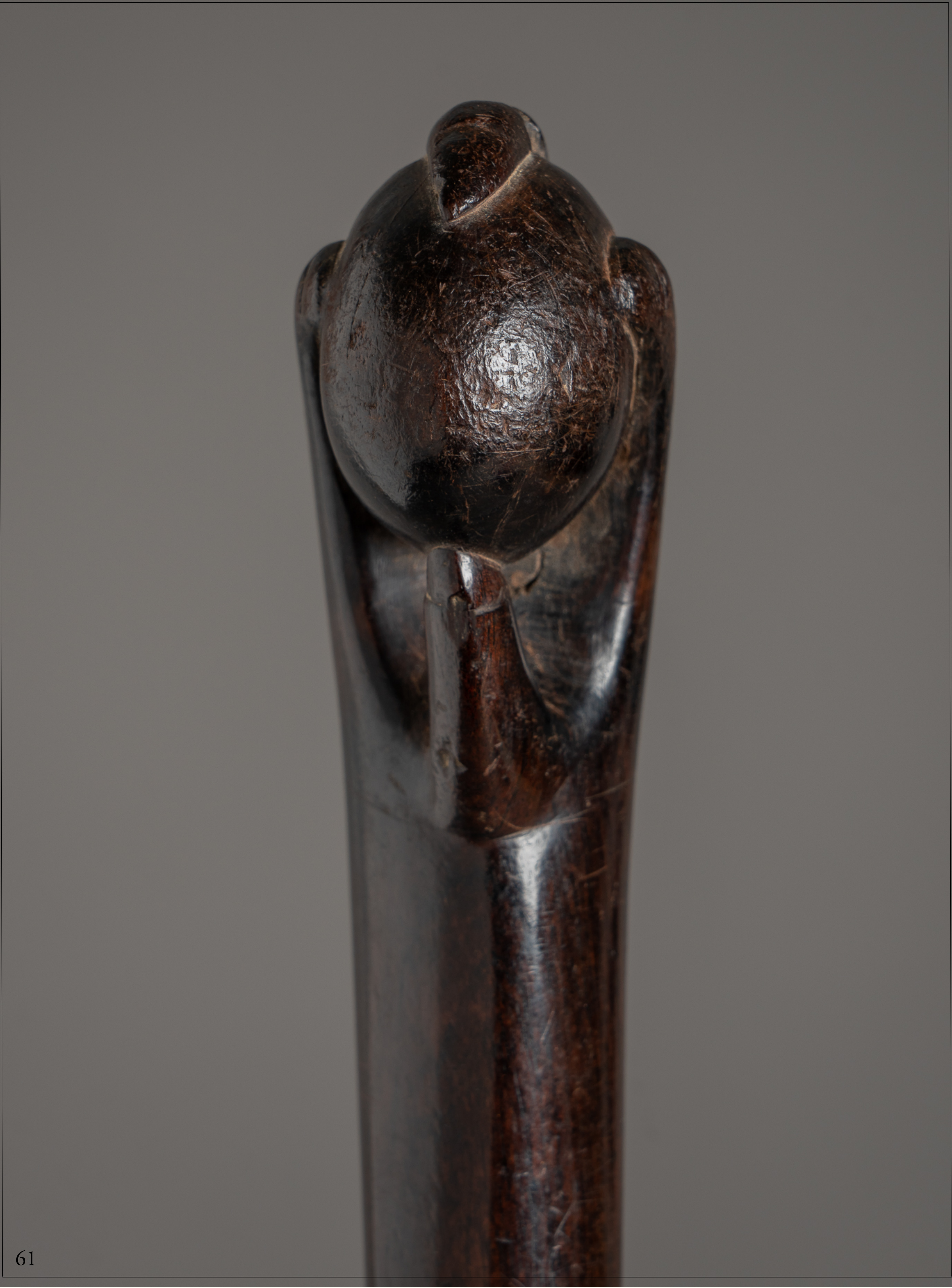
PRESTIGE STAFF

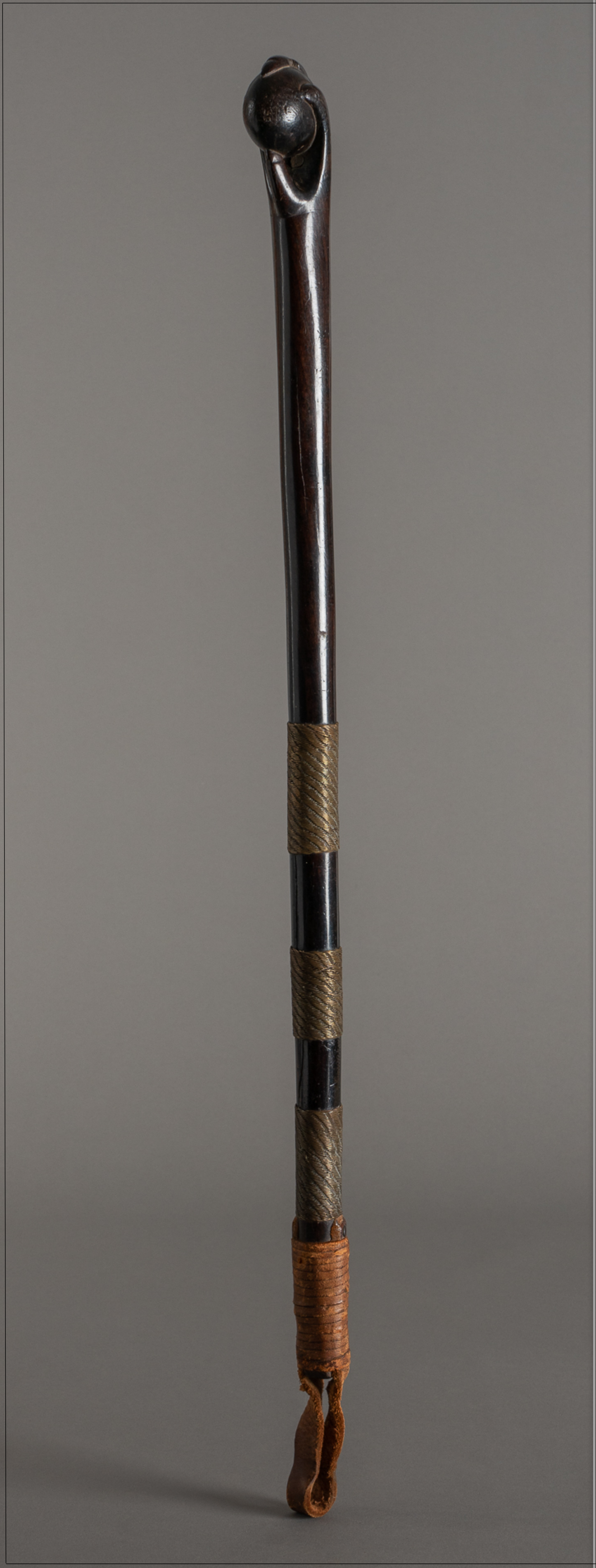
Shangaan, South Africa

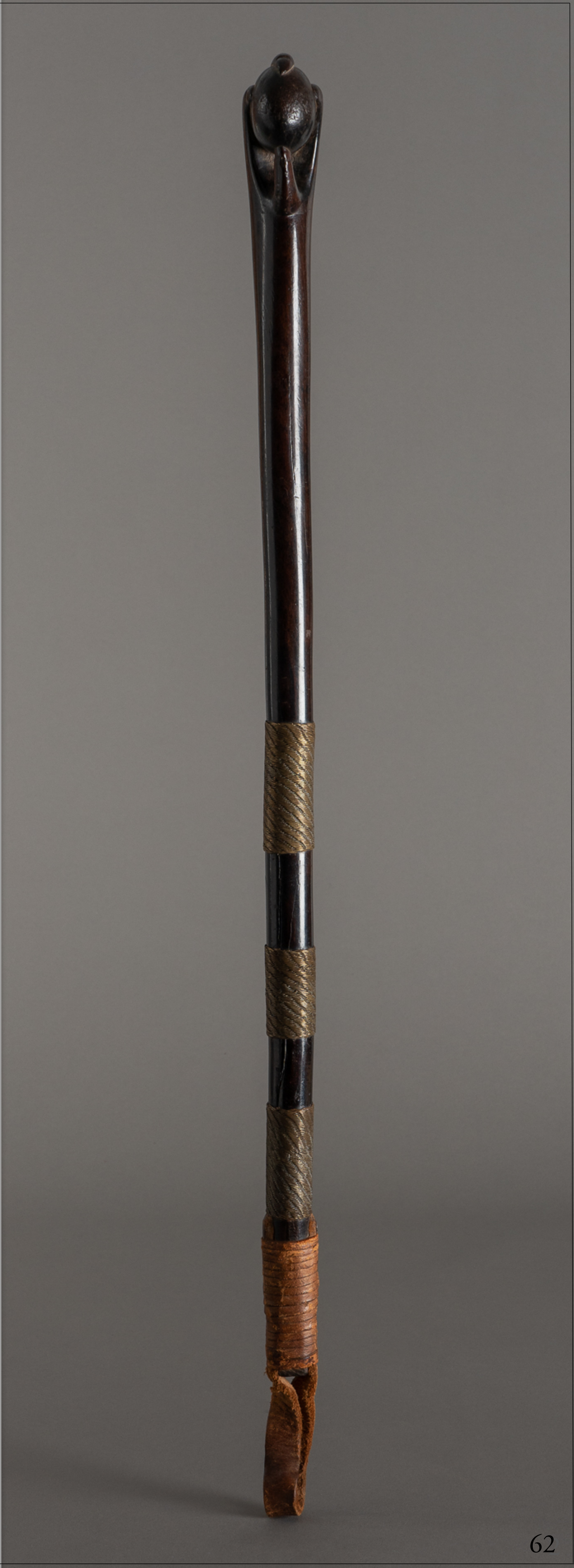
Late 19th or early 20th century
24” l
Wood, wire, hide
Provenance: Ex private South African collection

This artfully carved hardwood stick features a four-fingered claw grasping an egg, symbolizing the fragile and somewhat mysterious nature of life. Graced with a dark patina, the shaft is wrapped with three wide bands of dense brass wirework, reinforcing the grip.

The vendor's father, who farmed in the Limpopo district of South Africa, was given this piece by an elderly farmhand. It lost part of its shaft after being trampled by a horse, and was converted into a horse whip by the addition of a hide hand grip. A similar staff, possibly by the same hand, is in the collection of the Johannesburg Art Gallery. This piece perfectly embodies the charming blend of understated sophistication and playfulness so unique to the wood carvers of South Africa.







Jacaranda

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